

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

THE WORD MADE FLESH

Explorations in Theology

I

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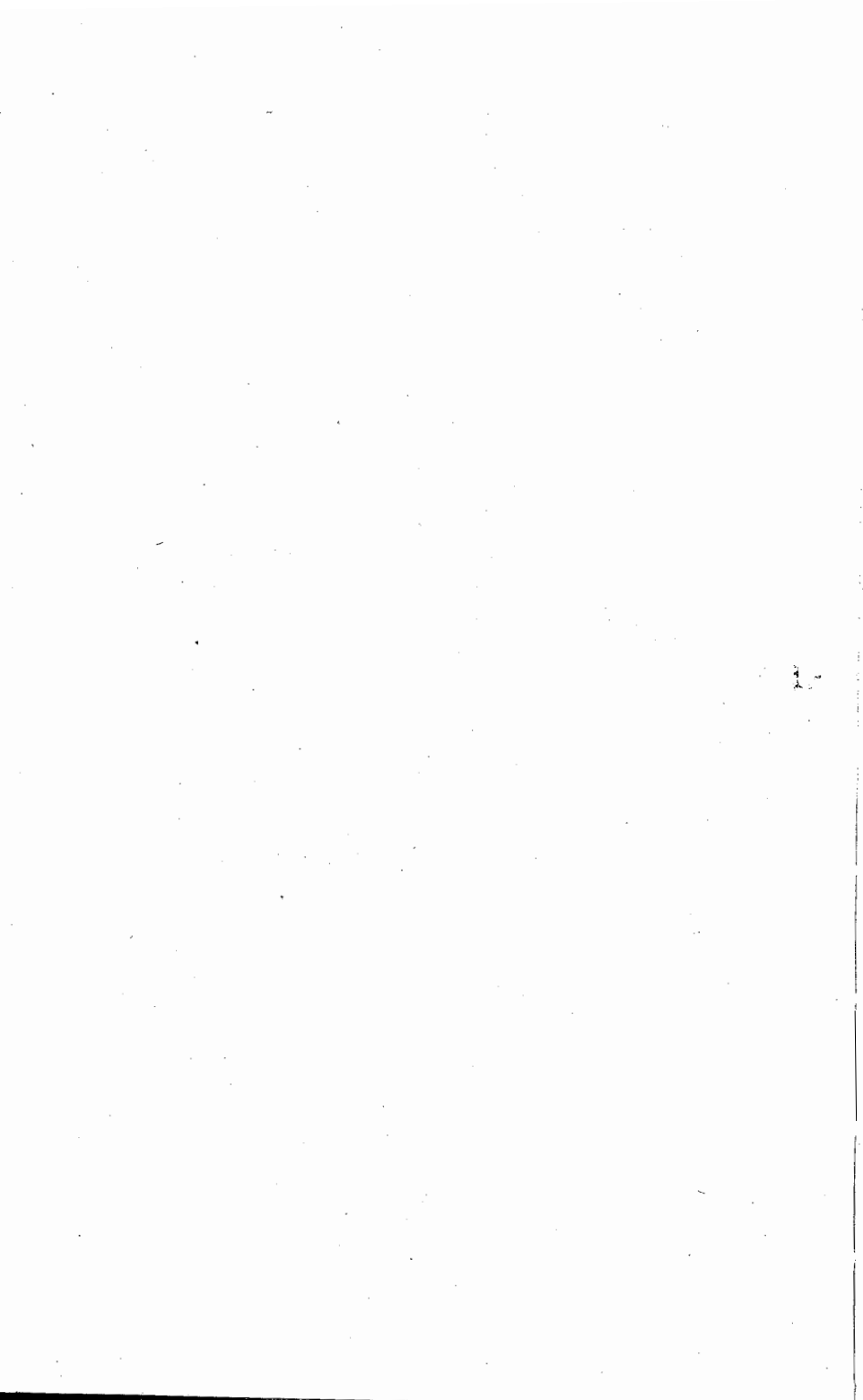
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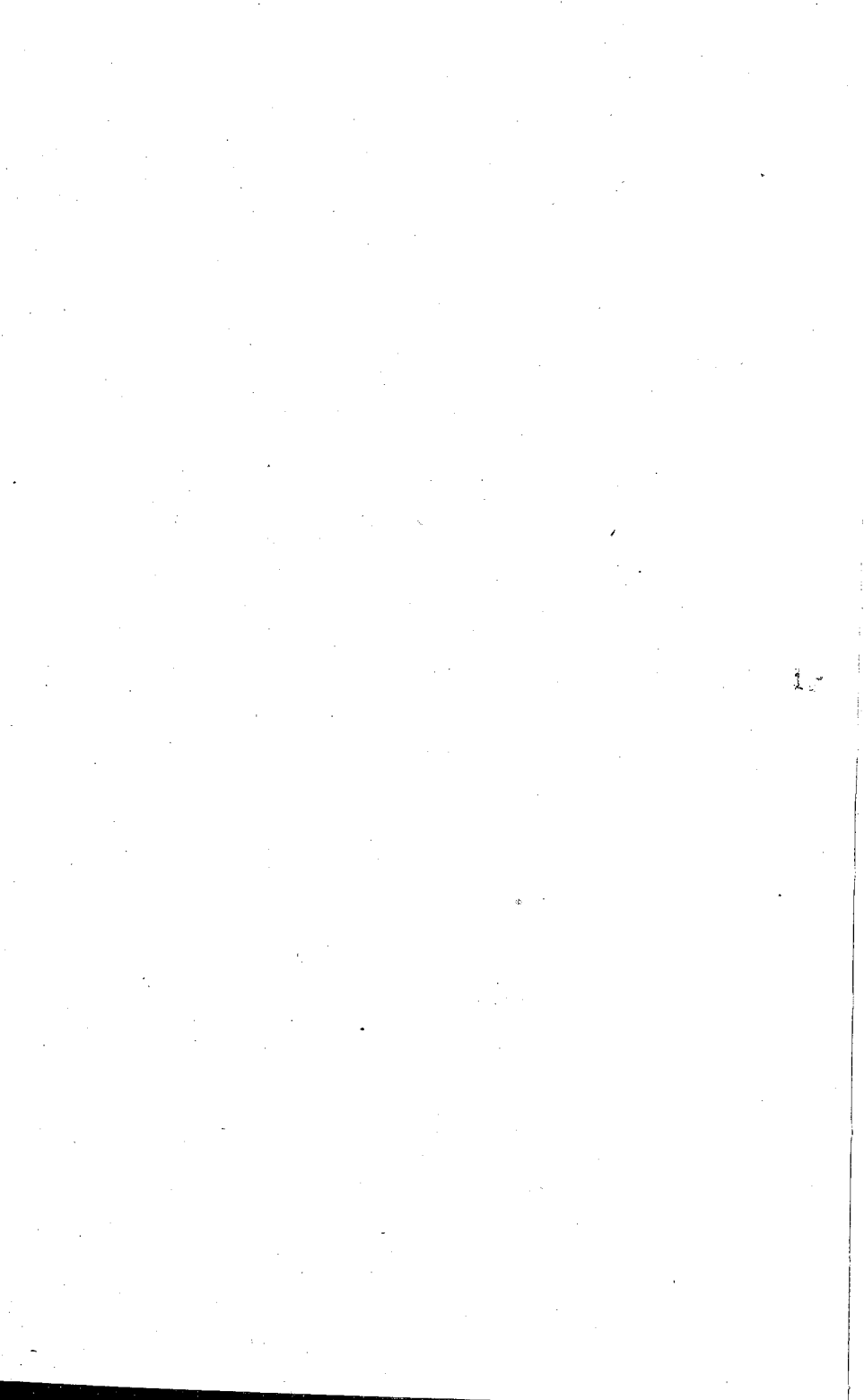
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INTRODUCTION

The papers collected in this volume are not formal theological treatises as such. Rather, as outlines and suggestions, they pattern the general nature of a sketchbook, and make no claim to finality. Human work however is necessarily incomplete, so that it may well happen that here and there we will catch on the wing, as it were, an idea that a more academic work may overlook. Nor should it be surprising that in a sketchbook certain themes constantly recur, that various concepts are approached and studied from many angles—this kind of repetitiveness and overlapping is due to the fascination generated by the unseen core of the subject matter. The figure studies of Rodin or Marées for example consist of outline sketches of an arm or a leg superimposed or juxtaposed; whether they represent a groping after the one correct curve, or whether, in fact, they represent the only possible way of reproducing human motion is impossible to ascertain. And so it is with the following essays in theology.



WORD AND REVELATION

THE WORD, SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Scripture is the word of God that bears witness to God's Word. The one Word therefore makes its appearance as though dividing into a word that testifies and into a Word to whom testimony is given. The Word testified to is Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, the Word who took flesh in order to witness, represent and be, in the flesh, the truth and life of God. The entire revelation concerning salvation is ordered to this manifestation of the Word, as to a central point—in a forward direction in the apostles and in the whole history of the Church to the end of time, in a backward direction in the Old Testament revelation in word and history, backward to the law and the prophets and even to the creation; for God upholds all things by the word of his power (Heb 1:3), creates all things through, for and by his Word. The Word is at the head of all things and by him all things consist (Col 1:16-17); and not only is the Word the divine Logos, for the Son of Man is the first and the last (Apoc 1:18).

The testifying word is the sequence of scripture from Genesis to the Apocalypse which accompanies the progressive revelation of the Word in the flesh and which reflects it as if a mirror—a function which distinguishes¹ it from the former Word. The word of revelation is the Word in the mode of action: God is apprehended in the act of self-communication. The word of scripture is the Word in the mode of contemplating his own action, recording and elucidating it, something which can only be performed properly and perfectly by the Word himself, since God alone compasses the entire range of his revelation; and only he can assign a valid human expression for it. The word of revelation is primarily the Son, who speaks of the Father through the Holy Spirit. The word of scripture is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit who as Spirit of the Father effects, accompanies, illumines and clarifies the Son's incarnation (before and after the

¹ In this distinction we part company with many Protestants. Scripture is not identical with revelation. And although it is truly God's word it is so only in the mode of testifying to his revelation. Scripture is in fact only the mode of God's self-witness in words, while there are besides other modes of his self-witness.

event), and who, as Spirit of the Son, embodies his self-manifestation in permanent, timeless forms.

At first sight therefore the two lines of the testified and the testifying Word seem to run parallel, but this appearance is deceptive. For both forms of the Word are ultimately the one Word of God testifying to itself in the one revelation.

Two sets of considerations can help clarify this concept.

I. There are, it is true, certain passages in which the contrast between the two forms of the Word is plainly evident. In the gospel for example the Lord speaks, acts and suffers without reference to the written account, i.e., to the gospel. This account was written down only later by eyewitnesses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is already active here as the Spirit of the Church. The Spirit has become, as it were, the most attentive hearer of the Word, but who, because he himself is a divine Person, sets down the divine truth in writing such as he heard it as Spirit and as he deems it important for the Church. The same is true for all that the apostles did and for the book of the Acts, as well as for all the historical books of the Old Testament, although the two forms of the Word are far less distinct in the prophets and in the Apocalypse. It is true of course that even then the word may first have come to the prophets personally, in a "private" revelation, and the publication made subsequently, in which case it makes no difference whether this revelation was first oral and afterward put in writing, or whether, on occasion, it was taken in written form from the outset. Revelation to the prophets and promulgation by the prophets tend to merge together, and form virtually a single act of revelation effected by the Spirit in the service of the coming or past incarnation of the Son. Both acts constitute so complete a unity that there is no reason to postulate a revelation prior to its committal to writing, as for instance in the sapiential books where the revelation is transmitted directly to the pen of the inspired writer. The same is true for the epistles of the New Testament. Admittedly, in the seven letters of the Apocalypse, a certain distinction is required inasmuch as the Spirit first dictates the letters to the churches to the Apostle John who then, either at once or at some later time, writes them down; the same is not true of the other epistles. Yet we must not overlook the

expository, quasi-contemplative character of both the sapiential books and the apostolic epistles. Just as the former interpret the history of the Jews and their law for the people of God, so do the latter interpret the gospel for the Church. The upshot is that the relationship between the testified and the testifying Word is a fluid one, varying from clear contrast to actual identity. Revelation then is effected partly before the writing, partly in the actual writing; in other words, scripture participates in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ through the Spirit.

2. The second line of thought takes us deeper, and definitely rules out the idea of a parallelism between the testified and the testifying Word. The central Word which God speaks and which comprises, as their unity and end, all the manifold words of God is Jesus Christ, the incarnate God. He however made his appearance in the sign of obedience, to fulfill the will of the Father, and thereby to redeem and justify the creation. He fulfills it inasmuch as he lets his earthly life as Word made flesh be fashioned, step by step, by all the forms of the word in the law and the prophets. His life is a fulfilling of scripture. Therefore he assimilates the scriptural word into his own life, making it live and there take flesh, become wholly actual and concrete. As his life proceeds two things stand out: the Word more and more becomes flesh, inasmuch as he imparts to the abstract nature of the law and the expectancy of prophecy the character of a divine, factual presence, and the flesh becomes more and more Word, inasmuch as he increasingly unifies the scriptural words in himself, making his earthly life the perfect expression of all the earlier revelations of God. He is their living commentary, their authentic exposition, intended as such from the beginning. He fulfills not only the Word of the Father coming down from heaven, but equally the word stored up for him in history and the tradition of scripture—the Word, that is to say, both in its vertical and horizontal provenance.

If he, as the One finally come, is the complete, definitive fulfillment, he is also, as a living person, the progressive, continual fulfillment. And since he is both of these in one, and always remains such, the possibility ensues of there being scripture even after him, though of a quite different character. The law and the prophets were like the

formal presignifying of the Word that would, at some time, become man: they were God's Word in human form and, indeed, the adequate expression of revelation, a Word not to be superseded or regarded as of merely relative significance. In this respect the word of the Old Testament served to define exactly the point of mediatorship, the place and the form in which God was to become accessible to man and of service to him. It was not without reason then that the law drawn up for the men of that time had as one of its functions the foreshadowing of the eucharist of the New Testament; see for example Psalm 118. And although Jesus made his life as man the compendium of all the scriptures, and realized in himself all its promises of eternal life (Jn 5:39-40), still there can be a scripture subsequent to him; and this fact is proof that the fulfillment of the Father's decree does not imply its annihilation; that Jesus' fulfillment is not a conclusion (as in human affairs) but rather a new opening (as always with God); that he makes fulfillment issue in a new promise so as to remain at all times what he is, namely, the One who ever and again fulfills beyond all expectation.²

The Lord remains in the flesh what he is, the Word. He does not dissociate himself from what had been said before his coming, nor from what he himself has said or from what is said about him. The gospel is the living doctrine proceeding from him, become scripture, and abiding in the Church, but also a new "incarnate" scripture, a living participation in his own corporeal nature (as the Fathers repeatedly testify), and therefore in his own quality of being inspired. Just as the word he spoke as man is inspired by the Holy Spirit, so also is the written word; its inspiration is not something past and concluded but a permanent, vital quality adhering in it at all times. It is this quality

² "My words shall not pass away": we may ask whether it is not the case that the words of Moses and the prophets have passed away, and those of Christ not passed away; for what they prophesied has passed away by being fulfilled, but the words of Christ are ever full, ever in process of fulfillment; they fulfill themselves every day, nor are they ever overfilled. It is they, in fact, that are fulfilled in the saints, that are being fulfilled, that will be fulfilled in the future. Or else perhaps we should say that the words of Moses and the prophets are perfectly fulfilled, since, in their true sense, they are also words of the Son of God, and are always being fulfilled." Origen, *Comm in Mt*, no. 54, Berlin ed., vol. 2, 123-24.

which allows the Lord to adduce the word as proof that, in his fulfillment in the Spirit, he transcends all boundaries, all verbal limitations, in his superabundance of life and power. If then the incarnate Son merges all scripture in himself so as to make it fully what it is, namely the Word of God the Father in the Son, he also sends it forth from himself so as to make it fully what it is, namely the Word of the Spirit whom he sends out at the end of his earthly course, upon his return to the Father. In both forms therefore scripture is not a testifying word separated from the testified but rather the one Word of God in the unity of his incarnation.

In this connection the patristic idea that scripture is the body of the Logos receives added significance. If however we are not to view it as a merely arbitrary piece of allegorizing, we must place it more precisely in the whole setting of the incarnation.

The expression "body of Christ" can be used in many senses. The basic and primary meaning is the historical body which he took from Mary, in which he lived on earth, with which he ascended to heaven. The final form and purpose of his taking flesh is the mystical but nonetheless real body, the Church, the incorporation of humanity into the historical body, and thereby into the Spirit of Christ and of God. And to make it plain that the historical and the mystical body are not two disparate things but are a unity in the strict sense, there exist two means to effect incorporation, two means which bring about the transition from the first to the second bodily form: the eucharist and scripture. They mediate the one, incarnate Logos to the faithful, and make him who of himself is both origin and end the way (*via*); the eucharist does so inasmuch as he is the divine life (*vita*), and scripture inasmuch as he is the divine Word and the divine truth (*veritas*). The eucharist is the marvelous means of freeing Christ's historical humanity from the confines of space and time, of multiplying mysteriously its presence without forfeiting its unity and, since it is given to each Christian as his indispensable nourishment (Jn 6:53-58), of incorporating all into the body of Christ, making them in Christ one body through which courses the divine life. Through the eucharist the Church comes into being as the body of Christ; and while the

one flesh of the Lord is multiplied, mankind divided is unified in it. "And the bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-17).

Scripture contains the Lord as Word and as Spirit, in the same marvelous transcendence of space and time, without the Word ceasing to be unique and individual. Just as the eucharist does not mean that Christ's body ceases to be the one, historical body, so his word in scripture does not detract from its being present as a unique concrete reality. The two modes of communication have this in common: they universalize the body of Christ without making it any the less concrete. The universal validity of the words of scripture is not to be attributed to the abstract and universal nature of general truths of the human order. Scripture makes the incarnate Lord present in a way analogous to that in which the eucharistic body makes present his historical body. Hence Origen admonishes Christians to approach the word in scripture with the same reverence as they approach the Lord's body in the eucharist. The patristic tradition is continued in these words of the *Imitation of Christ*:

Two things are needful for me in this life, and without these two I cannot continue to live: God's word is light, and his sacrament living bread, for my soul. We can also say that they are two tables set out in the room of God's Church. One is the table of the holy altar; on it lies the sacred bread, the precious body of Jesus Christ. The other is the table of the holy law; on it lies the sacred doctrine which instructs us into the true faith, and reaches, behind the veil, into the inmost holy of holies (IV, II, 4).

"The Catholic Church, next to the body and blood of the Lord, deems nothing so sublime and holy as God's word in sacred scripture" (Origen). Both of them are made possible only through the historical Christ and his body the Church; they are both exclusively the gift of the Bridegroom to the bride, and for those outside they are always inaccessible and alien. It is recorded of the martyrs that they died rather than surrender the sacred scriptures to the heathens, just as Tarsicius died to prevent the eucharist from falling into their hands.

Both forms are express results of the Spirit acting on what pertains to the Son; to the Spirit is to be attributed equally the miracle of transubstantiation and the formation of the word in scripture. Indeed it is the work of the Spirit to form the mystical body of Christ by spiritually universalizing the historical Christ. The profound truth of their relationship is not affected by the fact that scripture does not contain the word in the manner of a sacrament. For the Lord is at all times ready to give himself to and work in those who receive him in a lively spirit of faith; and he is no less ready to reveal himself in person, as Word and truth, to those who approach the scripture praying, seeking and thirsting. *Per evangelica dicta deleantur nostra delicta.*

All this brings out clearly the relationship between scripture and tradition. The word of scripture is a gift of the Bridegroom to his bride the Church. It is destined for the Church and, in this respect, belongs to her; but it is also the Word of God, the Word of the Head, and as such it is above the Church. This variable relationship in which the Church exercises control over scripture, but only insofar as God's Word allows her to do so, is best clarified by the mysterious relationship between bride and Bridegroom, a mystery of the divine love. For the more God, in human form and therefore divested of power, delivers himself over to the Church in order to exalt and enrich her, the more must the Church humble herself as his handmaid, and adore, in the Son's humiliation, his sublimest majesty. If then she recognizes tradition as a source of the faith alongside scripture, it is far from her intention to evade the authority of scripture by appealing to traditions unknown, perhaps even formed by herself. What she really means is that the letter of scripture can, after the incarnation, only be a function of his living humanity which, in any case, transcends mere literalness. Scripture itself witnesses to this: "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book . . . many other things that Jesus did; but if every one of these should be written, not even the world itself, I think, could hold the books that would have to be written" (Jn 20:30; 21:25). Here the word that testifies asserts that the Word testified to, the Word of revelation, is infinitely richer than what can be drawn from scripture. And here the Word after the incarnation is essentially different from the word

before it. The Old Testament word was only coming, not a Word finally come and fulfilled. For that reason it could not have been the subject of a "tradition" (meaning thereby the expression of the fullness of the Word manifested, a fullness that bursts all the bounds of scripture.)³ Regarding the Old Testament word's expression of the law and the promises, it was on a par with what could have been comprised in ordinary speech and writing—it being always understood that this also could only have been assimilated in faith and through the grace of God who spoke it. The Jews however had as an object of faith no other divine revelations to Abraham or Moses, no other divine word to the prophets, than that contained (whether from the outset or subsequently) in their scriptures. Consequently there was in the old covenant no tradition as a source of faith: the scriptural principle was similar to that of Protestantism in relation to the New Testament. For it is not so much the organic character of history, as the Tübingen theologians held, that makes tradition a source of faith from the time of the incarnation, but primarily the uniqueness of the person of Christ and of his relationship to his mystical body, the Church. Except for tradition the scriptures of the new covenant would resemble those of the old covenant, having its law and promises; it would not be the word-body of him who also dwells and works in his Church as the living eucharistic body (not present in the old covenant).

In this the eschatological character of strict Protestantism, which denies the Mass and transubstantiation, is perfectly logical. The God of the old covenant speaks from heaven in explicit language, but he does not deliver himself up to the people. But Christ delivers himself up to the Church because he has delivered himself for her on the cross (Eph 5:2; 5:25), because the Father delivered him up to the cross for her (Rom 8:32), because he finally delivered up his Spirit on the cross

³ There was of course tradition in the human sense, insofar as the fixing of the word in writing came later and harked back to the traditions of centuries—a normal procedure with ancient peoples. This kind of tradition is a sort of pregnancy whose purpose is the bringing forth of a child fully formed, namely the word of scripture. In the New Testament, however, scripture is present at the beginning of the Church's history, and thus immersed in tradition, which is its vehicle.

(Jn 19:30), the Spirit he breathed on the Church at Easter (Jn 20:22). So it is that he delivers himself over to the Church as eucharist and as scripture, places himself in her hands in these two corporeal forms in such wise that, in both forms, he creates a means of being present in the Church as the one, ever active, unchanging life, life that is yet infinitely manifold, ever manifesting itself in new, astonishing ways. The Word of revelation infinitely surpasses all that the word that testifies can possibly contain; and this superfluity becomes available to the Church in the living eucharistic presence of Christ; the necessary reflection of this vitality in verbal form is the principle of tradition. Scripture is itself tradition inasmuch as it is a form whereby Christ gives himself to the Church, and since there was tradition before scripture, and since there could have been no scriptural authority apart from tradition. At the same time scripture, as the divinely constituted mirror of God's revelation, becomes the warrant of all subsequent tradition; without it the Church's transmission and proclamation of the truth would be imperiled, in fact made impossible—and the same is true for her holiness—without the presence of the eucharist.

The word of scripture, as God's word bearing witness to itself, is essentially threefold, being word of God, God's word concerning the world, God's utterance to man.

1. *Word of God.* It is word, not vision, not feeling, not mere halting speech, such as human speech about God would be at best. A word, that is, of unequalled clarity, simplicity, precision. This character of the word derives from the two mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation. Since God has in himself the eternal Word that expresses him eternally, he is most certainly expressible; and since this very Word has taken human form and expresses in human acts and words what it is in God, it is capable of being understood by men. The first would be of no avail for us without the second, the second unthinkable without the first. The identity of Christ's person in his two natures as God and man is guarantee of the possibility and rightness of the reproduction of heavenly truth in earthly forms, and of its accuracy in Christ. "Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we have seen. . . . He who comes

from heaven is over all. And he bears witness to that which he has seen and heard" (Jn 3:11, 32). But this truth of God, with all its precision, is yet personal (the Word being the person of the Son), and therefore sovereign and free. The Son is not some kind of mechanical reproduction of the Father; he is that regiving which is effected only by perfect love in perfect sovereignty. For this reason the translation of the divine Word into a human word is itself, through the Son, sovereign and free, and not verifiable other than in the Son himself. "I am the truth." "No man comes to the Father but by me." Faith therefore, bringing acceptance of the word, is demanded in that the truth proclaimed is primarily divine (and so surpassing human understanding) and, secondly, personal, that is to say, brought about only by trusting in the freedom of the divine Person who forms it; for in fact the exact correspondence between the divine content and the human expression is inseparable from the person of the incarnate Word of God, being itself the effect of the incarnation. In other words the relation between the human and the divine in scripture finds its measure and norm in the relation between the divine and human natures in Christ. And just as the whole of Christ's humanity is a means of expressing (*principium quo*) his divine Person (*principium quod*), and this in turn being the expression of the Father, so each word of scripture is a purely human word, but yet, as such, wholly the expression of a divine content.

This concept illustrates how the much discussed relationship between the literal and spiritual senses of scripture is a christological problem, one soluble only on the basis that the two senses are to each other what the two natures of Christ are to each other. The human nature we come into contact with first; it is the medium covering yet revealing the divine element, becoming transparent in the resurrection, but never, in all eternity, to be discarded or disparaged. The spiritual sense is never to be sought "behind" the letter but within it, just as the Father is not to be found behind the Son but in and through him. And to stick to the literal sense while spurning the spiritual would be to view the Son as man and nothing more. All that is human in Christ is a revelation of God and speaks to us of him. There is nothing whatever in his life, acts, passion and resurrection

that is not an expression and manifestation of God in the language of a created being.

The perfect correspondence the Son effects between expression and content does not imply that the content, which is divine and indeed God himself, does not surpass the expression, which is in created terms. Christ's divinity cannot be wholly comprehended through his humanity, and no more can the divine sense of scripture ever be fully plumbed through the letter. It can only be grasped in the setting of faith, that is to say, in a mode of hearing that never issues in final vision, but in a progression without end, a progression ultimately dependent, in its scope, on the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:3; Eph 4:7). Faith, the foundation of all our understanding of revelation, expands our created minds by making them participate in the mind of God, disclosing the inward divine meaning of the words through a kind of co-working with God (1 Cor 2:9, 16); for this reason it is the saint, the man most open to the working of the Spirit, who arrives at the closest understanding. He will not do what the ordinary man, so dominated by original sin, does almost unawares, yet with such desperate persistence: confine the meaning of God's word within human bounds, admitting its truth only to the extent that it corresponds to human forms of thought and ways of life, and content himself with the meaning he has managed to elicit at some time or other, as if it was the final one, attempting to do what the Magdalen was forbidden: "Touch me not (i.e., do not keep clinging to me), for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (Jn 20:17). The idea that one has understood a passage of scripture finally and completely, has drawn out all that God meant in it, is equivalent to denying that it is the word of God and inspired by him. For the effect of inspiration is not to be seen principally in the absence of error in scripture, which is only a by-product of inspiration—many a book is free from error without thereby being inspired. Inspiration involves a permanent quality, in virtue of which the Holy Spirit as *auctor primarius* is always behind the word, always ready to lead to deeper levels of divine truth those who seek to understand his word in the Spirit of the Church, the Spirit she possesses as bride of Christ. The primary content of scripture is always God himself. Whether it is narrating historical events, enunciating laws or relating

parables, God is speaking and speaking about himself, telling us what he is and about the manner in which he surveys and judges the world. To penetrate into the spirit of scripture means to come to know the inner things of God and to make one's own God's way of seeing the world.

2. Scripture then as the word of God is also his *word concerning the world*, and this, once again, only in relation to its union with the Word of revelation, which is the incarnate Son, precisely because God has made the Son the source of the meaning of the world and sees it in no other connection than in the Son. In him it was created: the "in the beginning" of creation (Gen 1:1) is to be seen in relation to the "in the beginning was the Word" (Jn 1:1). Consequently it was created for him as its end, just as, firstly, "we" the believers (Eph 1:4) and then "all men" (1 Tim 2:2-6), indeed "all things in heaven and on earth", were to be planned, chosen, created and reestablished (Eph 1:10) in him, so that he, as "first and last", holds the keys of all (Apoc 1:18). This he is not only as Logos but as incarnate and crucified.

God did not plan the foundation of the world and bring it to pass without, in foreseeing sin, forming his decree for the redemption of the world, and this through the future incarnation of his only-begotten Son. Redemption therefore is not something in the mind of God posterior to the creation of the world. On the contrary the world was created in the foreknowledge of its need for redemption, for it to be the stage on which redemption should be enacted. Consequently, it is not only through the eternal Word that this world was conceived from eternity and created by God, but, rather, for the sake of the Word, who was to take flesh, who became flesh and dwelt among us.⁴

Since, then, the whole creation is formed in, through and for the Son, it participates, in its very root, in his formal character as Word. The Son as the Word incarnate is the supreme and dominant law of the world. This idea is like an eminence from which we may look back and see the word of God—that is, the law and the promise, the form of the word selected by God to enshrine his dealings with

⁴ Loch and Reischl, *Die hl. Schrift* (1885), re Eph 1:4-5.

mankind—as an anticipation and as a kind of basic setting of the incarnation. And we may also go back beyond the Old Testament and say the same of that form of the word set in the heart of creation itself, in the “nature” of the creature, replacing for the gentiles, in whose hearts it was engraved, the law and promise given exclusively to the Jews (Rom 2:14–15). In both cases, that of the Jews and of the gentiles, the presence of the word of God within them was the center of gravity and ruling principle of their lives. A human being means one to whom God has spoken in the Word, one who is so made as to be able to hear and respond to the Word. The Alexandrian theology, which derives the rational character of the creation (in a wider sense also the rationality of the subhuman creation) from the presence of the Logos within it, agrees here with modern philosophers such as Dilthey, Heidegger, Kamlah, who see the significance of the derivation of *Vernunft* (reason) from *Vernehmen* (perception), or Buber and Ebner, who place the essence of created being in its capacity for and capability of the word. Maximus the Confessor even declared that there are three stages in the realization of the Word in the world: the word as nature, the word as scripture and the Word made flesh in Christ. Accordingly the law of history and that of nature is, ultimately, to be measured by the law of Christ, the final and definitive Logos of the entire creation, for man finds the word that expresses and “redeems” him only in hearing and vitally responding to the Word of God in Christ. However secular this human word may seem as culture, art, philosophy, pedagogy and technology, it can yet be a response to God’s call, and so a bringing back of man and the world to God. Thus in responding to God’s Word man will also be enabled to “redeem” the word lying deeply hidden in the nature of things, to say what each thing says (Claudel) and, himself infused through Christ by the Word, to express the creation subjected to him. But this ordering exacts from man that, the more he approaches the summit, Christ, the more acute should become his perception of the word’s concretization in history. In nature the Word is present in a permanent state, in history it is present in individual events, in revelation it has that actuality and singularity of God which transcends all the laws of historical time, just as God reveals himself in the “one man Jesus

Christ" (1 Tim 2:5) in an ever-present "today" (2 Cor 6:2; Heb 4:7) without any diminution or staleness.

3. Scripture therefore is *God speaking to man*. It means a word that is not past but present, because eternal, a word spoken to me personally and not simply to others. Just as the eucharist is not merely a memorial of a past event but makes eternal and ever-present the single, living body and sacrifice of the Lord, so scripture is not mere history but the form and vehicle of God's word addressing us here and now. Man's life, at its deepest level, is a dialogue with God but one in which God's word to man is infinitely more important than man's to God, and man can respond as he should only through a constant hearing of the word (contemplation must here be understood as listening). Furthermore all that God has to say to any man he has spoken once and for all in Christ (Heb 1:1), so that each of us must individually acknowledge and make his own all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ (Col 2:3). When, finally, we consider that scripture is the divine testimony made by Christ, it is clear that reading and contemplating scripture in the spirit and guidance of the Church is the most certain means of discerning what, in the concrete, is God's will for my individual life and destiny, of discovering the means appointed by him. It is here that God has spoken, here that he never ceases to speak in the fullness of his Word. From this source the preacher steepes himself in the knowledge of the things he has to impart to his hearers, while here each individual believer encounters God's word addressed to him personally in the most direct fashion. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is, as the Lord has said, nourishment for the soul (Mt 4:4). Thomas Aquinas comments:

One who does not nourish himself on the word of God is no longer living. For, as the human body cannot live without earthly food, so the soul cannot live without the word of God. But the word proceeds from the mouth of God when he reveals his will through the witness of scripture (*Cat aurea in Mt 4:4*).

The word of scripture is above any other word concerning God; in virtue of its christological form it is a word opening into God and

leading into him. To phrase this in human terms, it is selected by the Holy Spirit with such art that its precision never involves limitation (as is the case with human utterance), that the single truth it conveys does not rule out any other truth, whether allied, contrasting or complementary; it never bolts any door but opens all locks. Even the Church's definitions, though infallible and assisted by the Holy Spirit, do not share this special quality of scripture, for their significance is mostly to put an end to a period of uncertainty, to solve a point of doubt or controversy, rather than to engender a fresh perspective.⁵ However necessary these definitive pronouncements may be for the Church in history, they are by no means the basic sustenance of the Christian.

Since God's truth through Christ is imparted to the soul in scripture, no dialogue between God and the soul, however interior or mystical, ever takes precedence of scripture or replaces it. This must be asserted to counter the Protestant tendency to emphasize, on the one hand, the prophetic against the mystical element (Heiler), and on the other the word against mysticism (Brunner). To oppose the two is either to revert to an Old Testament idea of the word, ignoring its aspect as food of the soul and, therefore, its likeness to the eucharist, or else to misconceive the nature of Christian mysticism, whose only possible norm is revelation as contained in scripture. Scripture itself is mystical not only in its being inspired, inspiration being of the mystical order, but also because the whole of it, the Old Testament as well as the New, describes the continuous sequence of mystical experiences undergone by the patriarchs, prophets, kings, apostles and disciples. It would be far better for Christian mysticism to recognize in scripture its true canon, instead of diverting into the obscurities of individual psychology. Christian mysticism is scriptural mysticism, that is to say, a special charismatic form of encounter with the word. Its function, direct or indirect, is to convey the revelation of the word to the Church; thus it is essentially social. The Spirit lives through the

⁵ As Scheeben justly observes: "A diligent comparison and reflection on the expressions and indications of holy scripture affords . . . a fuller, deeper and more comprehensive understanding of revealed truth than is given in the authoritative dogmatic teaching of the Church" (*Dogmatik* I, 122).

centuries in the Church as the inspired author of the scriptures, and is ever at work in interpreting the revealed word, leading the Church deeper "into all truth" (Jn 16:13); and it continues to act in the "prophets" of the New Testament—those who, along with the apostles, Paul considered foundations of the Church (Eph 2:10; 3:5; 4:11), in the same manner that he included the prophets of the Old Testament. Admittedly their writings are not sacred scripture in the biblical sense, but only because, with the Lord and with his eyewitnesses, God's revelation had already reached its completion; and therefore scripture, as the form of the word testifying to this revelation, had likewise been completed.

However, where revelation is concerned, it is best to avoid speaking of a "conclusion". The word is inappropriate since the completion of fullness is not so much an end as a beginning. It is the beginning of the infinite pouring out of Christ's fullness into that of the Church, of the Church's growth into the fullness of Christ and of God, as described in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is moreover the beginning of the outpouring of the infinite riches of scripture into the Church, whose range the whole of world history will never suffice to exhaust. Every human book is finite in content. Each can be studied, read, committed to memory, until one day it is mastered and no longer needed. But scripture is the word of God; and the more we probe it the more do its divine dimensions broaden and impose themselves. "Strengthened with power through his Spirit . . . you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth"—the four-dimensional space of divine truth!—"and to know Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:18-19).

THE WORD AND HISTORY

I

Word here means the Word of God in Jesus Christ. And by history we do not mean exclusively what the Christian might describe as the imperceptible process of mankind's advance to salvation, namely, the actions of the individual and of the whole community as governed by the just judgment and grace of the Word that is Christ. Nor do we mean solely secular history as depicted in textbooks and treatises. Rather we take the Word to indicate the entire involved complex of temporal events that can never be wholly of a public nature, since their deepest currents belong to the personal domain, or purely secular, since their strongest driving forces derive from a philosophical or religious commitment, from a man's belief or unbelief, love or hate, hope in one direction or another or refusal of hope. A purely secular view of history is quite impossible. Historical science may attempt to be neutral as regards the philosophy of history but it cannot controvert the fact that its subject—man in his acts and sufferings—conducts himself, in small things and in great, according to his basic idea of ultimate meaning, that is to say, as a philosopher.

Thus the science of history passes naturally into the philosophy of history—always immanent within it—since no one can describe without partisanship the efforts of mankind in general to discover the meaning of life and action in time. To solve this question history can only resort to action, whose inner dialectic, however, as it proceeds, cancels the meaning previously accepted and allows a fresh one to emerge; events are judged by events on an inner-worldly level so that, in this sense, world history is judgment of the world from within it. But this hard and implacable judgment of the Hegelian "directing world spirit", a spirit we have lately seen and experienced once again and which brings a salutary disillusionment to human imaginings, is far from being the kind of judgment that satisfies the deepest and most just aspirations of the human spirit. And its failure is more pro-

nounced in proportion as man's goal becomes more rational through self-consciousness and self-direction. Neither the pre-Christian nor the Christian conception of history claimed to solve the problem of the inner meaning and movement of history through a consideration of the course of events. The only "solution" achieved in this manner was through a reduction of the real metaphysical questions to a superficial, arid pattern of historical "progress". This pattern in turn can be made to serve as the key to the whole only by misconceiving, indeed depreciating the meaning and value of the human person and the whole philosophy of man. A philosophy of history which does not take account of the "mystery" of meaning but which offers a final solution, a clear explanation of the beginning and end of history, is ridiculous from the outset, just as any philosophy is that claims to be able to define being and existence. The perpetual contrast between individual and social eschatology is a potent warning for all philosophies of history against toying, even in thought, with final "solutions". The meaning of the individual and his life of toil is not to be sacrificed either to the Hegelian world spirit or to the Marxist collectivity or to the American idea of progress; yet, at the same time, neither can the meaning of history be reduced simply to the question of the individual. The problem of existence presupposes not only psychologically but ontologically that the solution is possible. The very helplessness of temporal existence is the ground for the consoling postulate of eternity, even though the consolation may at times elude us; it even appears in Nietzsche's absurd philosophy of eternal recurrence: the human freedom to question, in positing itself, desires to transcend itself by affirming and assenting to the being given in the act of existing.

For the believing Christian, however, God's salvific action, his redemption of the sinful world through Christ, is present within human history. There is, within the time that passes away, a "fullness of time" in Christ, born under Augustus and dying under Pilate and Tiberius, in the epiphany of God to whom Asia paid homage in the person of the three kings, and at whose death, according to Dionysius, the heavens were darkened even in Egyptian Heliopolis (*ep* 7); there is moreover a resurrection of the buried Christ, testified to by a definite number who saw him (1 Cor 15). Yet this salvific action passed almost

unnoticed by world history, and the tremendous impact it subsequently unleashed on the course of history was in fact due to believers who, in the perspective of history, are not specially distinguished from other believers and witnesses. The proofs they adduced for the truth of their faith, namely, the miracles worked by its Founder and his fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, necessarily presuppose the faith they support if their full force is to be perceived. Paul himself was aware of this fact and used it as one of his principal arguments for justifying his own life as an apostle, showing at length and forcibly that it was only explicable on the basis of the truth of his mission. And the longer the Church continues, the more conclusively does this witness pass from individuals with apostolic and charismatic endowments over to the Church as a whole, which "in itself, by reason of its marvelous expansion, sublime holiness and inexhaustible fecundity in all goods, its catholic unity and unconquerable persistence, is a great and ever-present motive of credibility, and an irrefutable witness to its divine mission" (*Denz* 1794).

The very same Church however is so firmly entrenched in world history as to become part and parcel of it: after a period of defiant indifference, on the ground of her supernatural qualities, to all that pertains to world history, the Church has become so thoroughly versed in the methods of mundane life and action—even to the point of assuming all the usual secular modes of organization, even applying force in discipline and punishment, and at times even applying force to secure conversions—that its administrative structure was highly commended in an American survey of large scale enterprises. The result is that the supernatural mystery of its existence in history can no longer be supposed clearly evident to nonbelievers. On the contrary, from the secular point of view, the historical influence of the Church is sufficiently explained by its initial powerful influence and by its subsequent skillful exploitation of the existing political situation. In our day the Church is increasingly being forced to take the defensive, and it may well be that the future, though hardly the present, will bear eloquent testimony to unbelievers in support of the transcendental source of its historical greatness. In the earlier period of Christendom when the secular and the spiritual elements were

much more closely intertwined, the organic quality (the living unity pervading all the members) was a visibly striking testimony to the presence of the Spirit. But now it is cast into the shade by the various forms of unity achieved in the secular sphere and even surpassed by these purely human achievements so that in the eyes of unbelievers it now works more to the disadvantage of Christianity than for it. The Church, now so deeply involved in the world, is assessed by it on secular standards, and found wanting. Had it the right to be so incarnate in history when it could promise the world no other form of salvation than one transcendent and eschatological? The reality it proclaims is essentially a hidden one which, as its Founder himself foretold, would scandalize men and rouse opposition even to death. And the more mankind strives to organize itself—such action having necessarily an eschatological aspect, and so in competition with the transcendental Christian eschatology—the more do faith and history seem hopelessly irreconcilable. Protestant views of history (e.g., those of Niebuhr, Löwith, Barth) developed from the supposition of such a cleavage.

In the present state of history there stands out, as never before since the founding of Christianity, the power of the Word that Christ spoke and that he is. That the obscure Galilean should have been the fullness of time cannot be established by empirical means. But that he spoke words which have since become part of and dominate world history, words without parallel either before or since, even though obviously correlated with those of the prophets, is no hidden fact but patently historical. They constitute the link between the hidden workings of salvation, whose existence and significance they affirm, and world history, in which they make themselves irresistibly heard. "Go therefore, teach all nations . . . all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Two things here demand a detailed explanation. The first is that since the word of Christ suddenly emerges from a state of concealment this state alone is what makes it comprehensible and alone accounts for its emergence; it emerges, that is, from a profound yet completely human consciousness of the mysteries of the Trinity and the redemption, from an overwhelming consciousness of mission embracing the entire creation and, for this very reason, a conscious-

ness of the sacrifice to be accomplished, of the surrender of his entire being to the world, the giving of his flesh and blood, of the sacraments. It is this hidden mode of existence that justifies the provocative and challenging nature of the word spoken, just as a gold deposit justifies issuance of notes of high value; and the Word itself constantly recalls this prior existence, as in the provocative statement "I am" and in the challenge to his enemies to investigate every side of his life: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"

This existence therefore can be examined and vindicated, but its inner logic is disclosed only when interpreted from the standpoint of the Word, that is, in relation to the Trinity and the redemption. Consequently Christ's spoken word is the expression of this existence, its supreme authority needing no other justification than his own being—this was also the case with the prophets; but at the same time Christ's existence is wholly the word, since all that it comprises of action and decision is handed over to man's investigation and use. Thereby the human element in Christ is so prodigiously enriched that we are forced to apprehend the presence of God in this man, the presence of the mystery of the love and of the missions of the Trinity at the heart of eternal life. This truth alone explains how the man Christ, in every particular, in his speaking and silence, his action and suffering, his prayer or mere presence, can be the perfect Word, utterance, expression and image charged with spiritual power, the pure revelation of life; for if he were simply man, human speech, in presuming to express God, would perforce lapse into incoherence and finally silence, as do all human theologies and mysticisms, whose highest form is apophatic. Christ's word on the contrary, though it conveys the hidden mystery of God better than any other word, does not collapse but correlates perfectly the object and the expression. It is not merely an approximation, not merely a groping after the right word, as if the same truth could be uttered in another way. All the events of a human life—birth, persecution, obscurity, prayer, temptation, decision, training of disciples, dealings with friends and enemies, conflict, resistance, flight, joy, sorrow, passion, death, burial—all that goes into the making of the life of Christ is so pregnant and uncompromising in its significance, so comprehensible yet rich in meaning,

that the word and its necessity are taken together, that the perfect correlation which makes all the human elements expressive of what is eternal points directly to the hypostatic union of God and man. *Verba mea non transibunt* [my words will not pass away]. In this one instance the transposition of the divine, the wholly other, into the human attains absolute perfection. It succeeds not through human genius, reaching as it does with its creative imagination for the right image and expression, whether unconsciously or superconsciously, but through a simple act of obedience, permitting the Holy Spirit of the Father so to act on the Son's freedom as man that each of his individual decisions, each situation and encounter is in the end always infallibly and superlatively right. The Son's obedience makes his whole life and being a continuous utterance of God to men. His obedience unto death is a state of abasement and self-annihilation, but it is precisely his "not my will" that allows the Father to express himself totally in the Son. And the Spirit who infuses this obedience in the Son is, though the Spirit of the Father, equally the Spirit of the Son: *qui a patre filioque procedit* [who proceeds from the Father and the Son]. Only thus is the fullness of time brought about.

In the Old Testament too God sent out his word to work mighty things (Ps 107:20; 147:15; Is 15:11); there were also in the Old Testament men who dedicated their entire lives in the service of the word; but the Spirit of God could never be the spirit of the men obeying him. For this reason a man's obedience could never have been his perfect freedom. In that God's word created the covenant with his people, the latter was without much reflection made the "expression" of God's revelation and a "word" for all people. Nonetheless this word, which objectively applied to all peoples and proclaimed the universality of redemption, was for the time being in the state of "promise", since the Israelite was a "hearer", one turned to God to receive the word he spoke, but one not a "bearer" of the word—which as a believer he could and should have brought to the pagan world. Only in Christ does man (which Christ is) become the Word; but since this word is established and spoken it must also go out to all men; in him its mission is released and in him God's revelation becomes the Word, which is identical with a man's individual existence. Therefore, in this

man, man in general is addressed. The Jews did not cause the histories of Egypt and Babylon, still less that of Rome, even though God as Lord of all "powers" made use of them to guide, punish and raise up Israel, even though the will of God concerning his people was made known to Pharaoh through Moses. But in the New Testament the Word of God is given as a man to man as such, and so to all peoples, given no longer in the vesture of a particular nation but in the nakedness of one human being to another. Thus the new covenant is far more profoundly "historical" than the old, despite all appearances to the contrary. And the community in conjunction with which the incarnate Word places himself within history, that is, the Church, is not like Israel a kind of nation whose domestic events other people can disregard. It is on the contrary itself the expression, itself the vesture and message of the power of the incarnate God speaking to and governing the course of world history.

2

Now therefore we find ourselves situated, so to speak, on the other side of the word, which now looks not at what is behind—the existence of Christ as the Son of God giving up his life freely in obedience for the life of the world—but at what is before—the world and its history. With this the Word is directly confronted, and for this it has come into the world to determine its course. But, once we begin to consider this encounter, a doubt arises: surely then the Word must be something so tremendous and radical that it can only be expressed in an eschatological setting, as John for instance describes it in the Apocalypse. In fact the Word confronts history as its judge and Savior, and the resultant situation is one where the momentousness of history is plainly apparent, where all previous misconceptions have been eliminated, and where no possible alternative between total belief and adoration and total rejection of the scandal of the cross is possible. The gospels all lead up to the point when the disciples, after their first flush of enthusiasm for the Master, were, in all that hap-

pened later — culminating in the cross, the resurrection and ascension — raised above all human anticipations to the point of seeing in their companion and leader the Lord of heaven and earth and of announcing him as such to all peoples. So long as one has not reached this point or, having reached it, does not let it rule all his thinking, the essence of Christianity is wanting. For this reason any consideration of the relation between the Word and history must start from eschatological reality and, having firmly established this, go back to ask how this absolute principle that the Word is the Lord of all history can be applied within history so as to mean not only that he holds history in his grasp as judge and redeemer, but also, precisely as history, as a series of events in the human and mundane sphere, he forms and moulds it in detail. While Protestant theology of history is content to limit itself to the first aspect, we hope to show that it necessarily includes and gives prominence to the second.

The incarnate Word confronts history as its judge for the simple reason that he is the measure by which man is assessed. This he would be even if the word had never been spoken, had never been invested expressly with the office of judge. The mere existence of the just man assigns the sinner to his rightful place. Even the silent presence of the true standard is eloquent, for thereby the truth is firmly fixed. This aspect of Christ has something so absolute about it as almost to eliminate, by contrast, his subjective aspect, his design of redemption: "I have come a light into the world . . . if anyone hears my words, and does not keep them, it is not I who judge him; for I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. . . . The word that I have spoken will condemn him on the last day" (Jn 12:46f.). Inasmuch as the word has been spoken once and for all through the Son's life on earth, judgment has already been passed in principle: "The hour is coming, and now is here, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (Jn 5:25); the enemy is, in principle, overcome and the Son can "wait" (Heb 10:15) for the word to have its final effect.

The pronouncements of the Word create the obligation to act accordingly, but this applies only to those who have to undergo judgment; as for the Lord who judges, he always retains complete freedom and sovereignty. It is not as if the Son's life and work were

a kind of lifeless and rigid standard by which men are judged by God—otherwise they must fail completely, not only because they always fall short of what the Son was and did but also because they are at enmity with him and have crucified him. But inasmuch as the Son does the Father's will, which is the salvation of sinners, he assumes, as Redeemer, the Father's office of judge, and since he has satisfied all the claims of justice he receives the freedom to make his own good pleasure the norm of judgment. A basic element in the justification of the sinner is a judgment and assessment, a free decision to see him in a particular light and no other, a supreme mystery and marvel of creative love which, desirous to see the sinner as a child of God, can actually bring about this status in his inmost being. Grace is essentially a mystery of the divine freedom, and it is precisely because of this fact that, here on earth, no philosophy of history is possible since the creative freedom of the judgment on men and events will be revealed only on the last day. From a purely human and historical standpoint, life and the course of events are always incomplete in their being and significance. They are inherently ambiguous, capable of one or some other interpretation, and wait on a decisive word from the Creator and Redeemer to attain a being and significance valid in the face of, and for, eternity. Already in the world of time the word comes to men as a "two-edged sword" and thereby proves itself to be living and effectual (Heb 4:12); but this means that, even in time, there has begun the separation between right and left (Mt 25:32), and it also shows that the relationship of man to the word remains a dialectical one right up to the last day. Christ not only foretold the fact of his coming judgment but also its content and procedure; and part of this content is that, despite the prophecy, both the good and the bad will be astounded by it: "When did we see you hungry?" (Mt 25:37, 44). The freedom of the word is such that even when revealed and uttered it retains its full sovereignty and dominance over men. Even in the passion, and here especially for it is judgment actually passed in time, the law of the *ecce praedixi vobis* is verified: Peter's denial, which the word did not make necessary and inevitable, as well as the scandalizing of all the disciples, not to mention the crucifixion and resurrection—everything that happened had the character of some-

thing overpowering, something wholly unexpected. Everyone should have known that the Son would rise again, but none of them believed it—and they were not naturally incredulous; only after the event did they find faith.

The freedom of the judgment on history comes out very clearly when it is viewed as an anticipation of the final judgment, itself correlative to the eschatological nature of the Church—"The time has come for the judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet 4:17), an echo of an Old Testament idea (Jer 25:29)—and the seven letters to the churches in the Apocalypse give as it were a specimen of the judgment in its relentless clarity both in approving and condemning. There we see how judgment on one and the same community runs the whole gamut from severity in reprobation to tenderness in election (Letter to Laodicea, 3:14f.), and the subject judged has to admit at once the "rightness" of both extremes even though completely unable to perceive it beforehand. Should he find himself placed on the left side he must confess that he has deserved it. If through grace he is on the right hand, he must likewise confess that the judgment of grace is just by reason of the work of Christ. Until this word of free assessment goes forth as the final utterance, no assessment of history is possible. For its value is fluctuating all the while. Sin is so great that history could be entirely an object of reprobation. God "endures" it in "long suffering", in "patience", in mitigating his wrath, in "mildness", in "grace" (the theme of the sapiential books, repeated by Peter and James, a theme both Semitic and Hellenistic); but this "attitude" of God can never be presupposed and reckoned with by a philosophy of history aiming at objectivity. And at the same time, the free judgment of God, or more precisely of Christ, is absolutely just, so patently just that "every mouth is stopped" (Rom 3:19), and no objection can be made even in thought. Because the one who judges is not the absolute God, who would seem to have no experimental knowledge of conditions governing the life of a created being (Job), but the man Jesus Christ who has himself experienced to the full the Father's justice on the cross and at the resurrection. As a member of humanity he is contiguous with it; what is more, he carries it in himself through his incarnation, the eucharist and the

passion. He knows by experience its conditions of life, its temptations. He knows each one of its sins, having suffered them on the cross. He knows from within the stirrings of each individual who is, whether actually or only potentially, a member of his mystical body. The judgment he freely makes is mankind's act of self-knowledge. But the truth about man can only be rendered visible in the procedure of rejecting some and choosing others (Mt 25), both free decisions. And this proves in the final analysis to be an act unifying what is seemingly disparate, rather than one dividing up mankind eternally, for on the cross the one "rejected", who bore all the world's guilt, is the "elect" par excellence.

Since judgment is already beginning in the house of God, and since the history of the Church in the sight of the world is a portion of the revelation of the future judgment, the Church judged takes its place at the side of the Judge; being already "measured" it can, along with him, become the "measure" of the world. Christians judge the world and even the powers that rule the world ("angels", see 1 Cor 6:2-3). The reason ascribed down the ages, from the early Fathers and Bede (in a lesson of the breviary) to Thomas Aquinas, is logical enough, namely that it is *specialiter* appropriate for those who "have left all things for Christ" to share the office of judging. Having the end of time always in view they have, from the outset, subjected the things of the earth to the measure and judgment of Christ.

3

Taking our stand then on eschatology we can now proceed to examine the relationship between the Word and history in the historical setting. The limits within which this is possible are clearly shown by what has just been said. Yet they are not so narrow as many Catholics define them under the influence of Protestant theology. For there is one dimension of the encounter between the Word and history that is open to experience, and that in two respects. First of all there is the description of what the presence of the Word of God has effected in

world history, and continues to effect, together with the interpretation our minds bring to these facts. Secondly we may go further and tentatively seek, as the Fathers did, to draw from the universal claims of the incarnate Word certain clues to the whole economy disclosed by his involvement in the history of mankind.

I. As to the first we have already spoken of it by way of introduction. The presence of the Word of God gives polarity to history. With the passing of the centuries it becomes ever more apparent that the Word has overthrown all rival religions. It is *verbum exterminans* in a spiritual sense. The various rival religions are reduced to mere expressions of human religiosity, a process hastened by the impetus of the enlightenment and communism—a religiosity, that is, not in the meaning of Marx or Feuerbach but somewhat in that of Otto and Frazer; the revelation of the numinous is given along with the very nature of man. The rival religions are interchangeable as regards their essential core; this was already indicated at the end of the last century in Ramakrishna's experiment, which was conducted in terms of the different basic religions one after the other, and claimed to have the same religious experience in Buddhist, Islamic and, apparently, Christian terms. It is only through man's reverting to the ideas, once discarded, of nationalism and racism that religions in the old sense have revived. The future belongs to the "religious man" who will "tolerate" the different outward forms religion may take.

In contrast there is, solitary, and ever more solitary, the word of God as proclaimed by the Church. The light however shines in the darkness, the world grows accustomed to its presence and, consciously or unconsciously, it borrows from Christian teaching much that is desirable for mankind in the ethical, cultural and religious spheres. The proclamation of human rights is doubtless due to religious inspiration. The Church is continually robbed and pilfered by secular humanism, whose aim is to take from her all that is useful to man, and to leave her only what is unserviceable, namely her absolute claims. *Et plagis impositis abierunt semivivo relicto* [and, after inflicting wounds on him, they went away, leaving him half dead]. Nonetheless the Church, which never ceases to be the light of the world, continues to present

the word anew and in a living, vital way. The word is a challenge to each individual, and sooner or later he must accept or reject it. If he evades the encounter, his evasion produces in him a deformation which is of his own making, his responsibility. There can no longer be any such thing as simple, untutored paganism; the word is so constituted that "no one can accuse it of sin". No one seriously impugns Christ's teaching—thus the Church is maligned. She ought to appear visibly "redeemed", so that Christians give scandal when they do not act according to the word they hear. Yet it is precisely the Christian who is the first to place himself under the judgment of the word; thus the argument from scandal is inconclusive. The only sound objection against Christ was formulated by Ivan Karamasov in the account of the grand inquisitor, but in fact Dostoevsky turned his argument into a defense of the word's silence. Christianity, said the inquisitor to the Lord, is too hard for human nature; one who really knows man has to make concessions, lower the required standard. But this objection redounds to the honor of the word. It constitutes a fresh challenge to man on the part of the Word, held fast in the prisons of the inquisition; for mankind will never bring itself to acknowledge in its midst the existence of a way of life that only one of them has carried through fully, even though innumerable others have followed his example, and to whom it ought to surrender unreservedly. Whenever anyone sets himself to pursue the highest ideal for mankind he must present himself to the word for the spiritual duel. The word issues its challenge to every person who wishes to make his mark on history; each person is summoned to confront it and to have his achievement measured by the achievement of the word. The word is the goad of human civilization. The present confusion brought about by modern progress is in large measure a sign of flight from an encounter with the word.

2. But is not the word, then, some kind of incongruous element within world history, forming no part of it? Or is it possible to see a convergence of the two, a common history? On these questions opinions differ. The present trend is one of scepticism in reaction against any sort of Hegelianism, one that rejects any attempt at a theological view of history that would be more than hypothetical.

New Testament theology, as an eschatological exposition of the kingdom of God, is essentially indifferent to the political history of this world. . . . Redemption as it works itself out does on occasion throw light on world history, but secular events are, as such, blind. Seen from the standpoint of the New Testament what determines the significance of Tiberius and Augustus, Herod and Pilate, is not their offices and actions but their role in God's plan of salvation. Jesus himself was born and crucified within an historical context, as a Roman subject, but he had no intention of christianizing Rome and its empire.¹

But is this absolutely correct?

The fact that Christ was born under the Rome of Augustus does not rule out, for the believing mind, that God could, had he so willed, have revealed himself in a previous epoch or two thousand years later, in Europe under Napoleon or in Russia under Stalin or in Germany under Hitler. Further, since the process of redemption, from beginning to end, concerns not kingdoms, nations or peoples but the individual soul there is no reason to deny that Christianity might be quite unconcerned with the alternations of history, and even with the difference between civilization and barbarism. Both of these in fact reveal, under different conditions, one and the same nature of man, who was no less man at the beginning of history than he will be at the end (Löwith).²

Against this argument it could be objected that the transcendence of Christianity as regards history should not be understood in the sense that Christ is not, at the same time, a real element within it, and therefore determined, as man, by his actual place in time and space. God's freedom must not be interpreted in a nominalist sense; the appeal to the *potentia Dei absoluta*, as opposed to the *potentia ordinata*, is, now as always, bad theology. And in the theology of history, as in all theology, the meaning (Logos) is to be sought in the facts and not in what God could have done had he willed. If it is true that Christ is "the fullness of the Godhead corporeally" and that he brings this fullness into time, it is equally true that the relationship of time to

¹ Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, "Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie" (Stuttgart, 1953), 172f. •

² *Ibid.*, 167.

Christ, both prior and subsequent to his coming, is far from being theologically irrelevant. Israel's history, precisely in its temporal sequence, always retains its significance as the way leading to the "fullness of time"; the stages are not to be inverted, abbreviated, eliminated.

Relevant too is the history, obscure as it is when compared with Israel's, of the "gentiles" to whom Yahweh, from the very beginning and increasingly as time went on, made known his demands and his dominion, and to whom on occasion he showed, as in a sudden flash, his providential designs for them in the salvation of the world. "For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my elect, I have even called you by your name. I have made a likeness of you, and you have not known me. . . . I girded you, and you did not know me" said Yahweh to Cyrus (Is 45:4-5), the "messiah" (Is 45:1), the "friend" (48:14), the "predestined" (46:11). There is a course of action followed by various peoples and rulers that, unconsciously yet basically, obeyed God's ruling and so was in the line of the redemptive process. At the same time it is not identical with the divinely directed political course of great powers like Babylon and Egypt, through which God led Israel onward to its destiny, so long as it was obedient to him. Nor is it identical with the course pursued by Pharaoh in his persistent rejection of the revelation made to Moses and Aaron, and therefore clashing with the redemptive process of history. But all this is only a prelude to the real drama since in the Old Testament the history of the chosen people is a national history.

The "fullness of time" is, historically speaking, characterized by the removal of the national boundary and by the extension of the redemptive process indiscriminately to all peoples. The elimination of the partition between Jews and gentiles is, as Paul demonstrates, grounded on the very essence of the mystery of redemption on the cross (Eph 2:11f.) and brings about a highly dramatic situation through the encounter of two universalist conceptions, as developed by the historical theology of the Epistle to the Romans, 9-11. The sphere beyond the "holy people" is, in principle, now brought in and illumined by the light of Christ and his word—*et quidem in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum* [and indeed their voice has gone forth into all the world].

Theologically speaking the Old Testament distinction between sacred and profane history is no longer an essential one; it continues to be valid only so long as the particular form of the Church remains necessary for her to proclaim and exemplify in her life the *universal* salvation already wrought. For it was to this Church that, for forty days, the risen Christ opened the "sense for the understanding of the scriptures" and imparted his revealed theology of history—how she was to "preach and testify to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk 24:44f.). And all that, in the "last times", goes to the "development" of man, of his potentialities and endowments, and all that has profound repercussions on human history, is taken up into what is clearly the significance of the whole: development from fullness into fullness.

Here once again, and more peremptorily, arises the question of the secular significance of the redemptive "fullness of time". As to the history of the Jews it can be readily understood why its different stages had to come about for Christ to be manifested. They were stages of the "education of the human race" which (for we can now see better than Lessing could in his day) were not only stages of Jewish history but also of mankind's self-consciousness, serving as an essential prerequisite of these Jewish stages. For apart from a definite degree of consciousness of cultural and therefore religious unity in the area between Egypt and Babylon, the progression, in the time of Moses, from poly- and henotheism to strict monotheism is inconceivable; likewise the idea of the Davidian kingship apart from the idea of the royal Sonship of God. Nor are certain elements of classical and late Jewish piety conceivable apart from the renewed contact with Babylon and, possibly, Iran; nor the spiritualized and ethical concepts of the sapiential books apart from contact with Hellenism, the books wherein Judaism became impregnated and liberated by the element that later, in Paul and John, was to make possible the complete universalization of the Christian message. In fact, in the Greek "miracle", as Heidegger brings out so forcibly, was accomplished the human mind's breakthrough from myth to philosophy, from magic to contemplation, from nationalism to fully achieved (for there were preliminary stages) internationalism and cosmopolitanism. In Christianity the universalism of Christ encountered the Greek conception

of a nature common to all men, and this contact formed a spiritual basis for the Christian mission. It was this widening of human consciousness which the "fullness of time" awaited as its external prerequisite; consequently Jaspers' "axis time", though conceived in an anti-Christian sense, is absolutely, and in the traditional sense, a *praeeparatio evangelica*. Greek universalism was the human prerequisite for an understanding of the claims over mankind involved in Christ's works and teachings, just as over the centuries it has been the vehicle for those claims. The Church took its origin in the coalescence of Judeo-Christianity and gentile Christianity, and the Pauline theology brings out clearly how the gentiles, though unable to add to Israel's "traditions of the fathers", still were by no means unable to contribute to the early stages of the Church, if only in the assertion of its freedom from the old law.

The same coalescence which was at the basis of the theological fact of the Church was also the foundation of the Christian culture, understood not as a closed system alongside other cultures but as the culture resting on the word of God and its workings within history, and so the center to which every culture is polarized, whether positively or negatively, as we have shown. From the Greek standpoint the *imperium romanum* was not simply one of the world kingdoms succeeding many others, but the first political embodiment of the idea of world unity that originated in Greece. This idea, despite its being frequently assailed and obscured, persists through all the centuries since Christ; the epoch of colonization, with its sudden vision of "one world", is no more than this encounter brought to fruition at the opportune moment, the *kairos*.³ And the same *kairos*, in a deeper sense and now ineluctable, is our present time, in which after all the various national rivalries are played out, the question of the destiny of the world as a whole, presented to Caesar and Augustus, must now be faced. We can now see that this *kairos*, in which Christ has come, the encounter of these two universalisms, is, theologically, the final one,

³ Consider Claudel's *The Satin Slipper* in which this epoch is viewed as a symbol connecting the Greco-Roman period and our own; or Péguy's *Eve* and the role he gives Athens and Rome, or his *Note Conjointe* and *Clio* with the interior encounter of Alexander and Christ, Felix and Polyeuctes.

never to be superseded. However its immanent elements, its component parts, may develop, it will always be forced into the same point of contact with Christ, the transcendent element. Each new stage of consciousness means a new responsibility to hear the absolute Word.

Once we recognize the theological significance of the intersection of the two universalisms, the various stages of history backward from the time of Christ are seen each to have its own theological relevance. This means that the historical theology of the Fathers, however mistaken in detail (such as the alleged dependence of Plato on Moses), was correct in its basic thesis: that alongside the Jewish revelation history in its clearly visible course, there proceeded a gentile salvation history whose course was obscure, and this we can only discern, apart from an occasional vivid glimpse, as in the case of Cyrus or the gentile "saints" of the Old Testament from Melchizedek and Balaam to Job, in its reflection in the Jewish consciousness. The difference is vividly apparent. One, despite all the sublime aspects of its culture and religion, was ultimately mythology and idolatry—we have only to recall the horrible "religious" literature of the Phoenicians and Philistines which so strongly influenced the psalms in their form. In the other we see the miracle of an experience of God given from above, purified and relentlessly driven forward at such a pace that, starting from nowhere, it led, within a few centuries, to the actual presence of Jesus Christ. Yet whatever took place in the shadow of sacred history, always providing the conditions for a fresh stage in the Jewish consciousness, cannot, precisely for this help it gave, be "indifferent" as regards the history of redemption. Whatever God used as an instrument for his Son's coming was taken up by him in the great recapitulation brought to pass in him. Admittedly, however, the gentiles remained up to his time in the "shadow of death" and, as far as salvation goes, without history. But from him a light shines out on their whole history, directly back to its origins, just as from Christ the light of justification shines back as far as Abraham, Noah and Adam.

Behold, I will establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. And with every living soul that is with you, as well in all

birds, as in cattle and beasts of the earth, that are come forth out of the ark. . . . And the bow shall be in the clouds, and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant that was made between God and every living soul of all flesh which is upon the earth (Gen 9:9, 16).

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORD

The relations between natural and supernatural revelation, between that given by the very being of things and that given by the word, and all the consequences in the spheres of natural truth (philosophy), natural ethics and law, et cetera, is one of the central problems in the controversy between Catholic and Protestant theologians—though of course the latter are not in accord (consider the discussion between Barth and Brunner, and Lackmann's statistical summary of the interpretations of Rom 1:18f.); and Catholics vary considerably in their interpretations of the Vatican definitions. It is not our intention to survey the problem in its entirety but rather to consider just one limited though essential aspect, one which may help to reconcile differences and allay prejudices. It is by no means a new aspect, being simply the application of the generally accepted christology to the problem of revelation; but perhaps it has not yet been adequately worked out in detail.

Once the older apologetic and fundamental theology had shaken off the imprecise ideas of German idealism, both philosophical and Christian, according to which creation was simply identified with revelation or the manifestation of the divine Being, and the revelation of the word, in all its depth and force, seemed reduced to a mere stage in the utterance of creation itself, there began a period marked by the emergence of a direct, and therefore naive, unreflective dualism between the two forms of revelation: on the one hand, an independent revelation derived from the creation, whose content could be detailed with some precision, even though uncertainty remained about fallen man's capacity for attaining knowledge in the religious sphere; on the other, the denial of any such "second" source of revelation alongside that of the Word of God in Christ. This second source seemed merely to tone down, obscure and distort the clear, definitive and exhaustive Word that the Father willed to give to the world through his Son, since men then claimed to derive most of what it concerned them to know simply from nature—and to reserve for philosophy and ethics much that derived from the word of God, almost to the point of supplanting it.

Surely this ostensibly Catholic misconception, which occasionally *seemed* to be adopted even by authorized exponents, is a clear indication of some defect in basic principles. It is true that Catholic theology has endeavored to rise from the second period of simple dualism to a third which would be characterized by a consistent and comprehensive christological outlook; but its consequences have yet to strike our evangelical brothers as sufficiently forceful and practical.

What follows is to be understood as an expression of a christological outlook. It will not however adhere to the usual course which starts from principles drawn from the revelation in creation to arrive at the revelation in the Word as the crown and summit—a course many evangelical theologians consider impossible as a method and at the least involving insuperable difficulties. Here we proceed in the reverse direction, from the revelation in the Word to that in creation. This we do, not on the basis of the well known if sparse texts of scripture, which speak of revelation in creation and whose meaning is the subject of considerable dispute, both philological and theological, but by determining what the word of revelation itself presupposes and implies. It may be that the resources of modern philology and psychology make us more amenable to this method than were our immediate predecessors. These sciences have taught us to discover, in an apparently uniform structure, different superimposed layers: philology by going back to “sources” and to previous redactions or verbal traditions, and thus, especially as regards texts of the Old Testament, coming upon certain archaic, legendary or mythical foundations; psychology by its parallel attempt to formulate the implications of the conscious spiritual life in the spheres of the instinctive, organic and vegetative life—processes which are at very early ages submerged into the twilight and total darkness of the unconscious. Yet this method did not have to wait for the coming of these two sciences. It was known from the very beginning of philosophical thought, and practiced as the method of “analytics”, which is not only the title of Aristotle’s book on logic (indicating the results of reflection on direct perceptions of the categories of being), but was the metaphysical method employed by Socrates and Plato, and later by Neoplatonism in its ascent to God by way of reflection. Perhaps too it might be

possible to read Hegel in this light (the reverse of the usual): to explain the "nothingness" of the pure *hic et nunc* we must, by analysis, traverse all the stages of reality until we reach the divine ground. But we are not now engaged in philosophy, but in Christian theology; and if, whatever its method and system, Christ is for it the summit and crown of all God's work in the world, if he is, as Paul and Irenaeus say he is, the *anakephalaiosis* of the entire creation, then theology's duty is to portray this in all its sublimity. This is its aim, and its means is an analysis of christology, bringing out the cosmic presuppositions that the incarnation of the Word of God implies.

I

Our starting point is the "directness" of God's word as it encounters us in holy scripture. It could reasonably be objected that what comes to us most directly is not the scriptural word but the word in its living proclamation, which is essentially continuous with the Word to which scripture is but a pointer, the Word Jesus Christ who endowed the apostles with the office and charismatic power of preaching. This is true enough; yet the scriptural word has as its function to bear witness, under the inspiration of God, to the Word of life, to the total Christ, both head and body. For this reason, and because it is word, in the human and primary sense (whereas that to which it bears witness can only be so described in a deeper and not directly intelligible sense), it is above all methodical and objective. Scripture is one book among many, or rather a collection of books of various kinds; moreover it is one of extreme complexity, posing more scientific problems than any other in world literature—one therefore that must be painstakingly examined philologically. We cannot agree with Origen (himself a great philologist!) when he equates the application of the tools of philology to scripture with a handing over of the incarnate Word to the torturer. This implied identification of the scriptural word with the Word himself and of the interpretation of scripture with the incarnation of the Logos is so absolute as to lead to numerous false

conclusions. Insofar as it expresses mistrust of anything to do with natural philology, this ingenious theory is really an outcome of the Alexandrian tendency toward the doctrine of one nature.

Nonetheless, after allowing due scope for the science of the word, we must acknowledge what is correct in Origen's view. Holy scripture, as the uniquely privileged witness to a unique event, is so intimately bound up with it that, apart from the event—understood in the sense in which it is witnessed in scripture, or witnesses itself in scripture—it cannot be interpreted at all. Philology can help toward this understanding but it can neither compel nor replace it. To understand the scriptural text according to its own defined mission (and to do otherwise would be to mistake its whole tenor) means accepting it on faith as the witness of the Holy Spirit (through the instrumentality of men) to Yahweh's dealings with his chosen people of the covenant, and to the fulfilling of this covenant in the person of Jesus, God and man. It is true of course that in every human statement there is a gap between what it conveys and what it means to convey, the word holding them apart as well as conjoining them. Yet we can never postulate a unique word that should correspond with the uniqueness of what is meant, for the very reason that no event in the world can claim absolute uniqueness; there is always some point of comparison with other events, and so there is always something one event shares with another. Consequently, however personal and relatively original a given utterance may be, it always contains an element of generality and formality, bringing it within the purview of linguistics, grammar, syntax, poetics, comparative philology and so forth.

What scripture bears witness to is, on the one hand, a section of human history, and thus something which can be expressed quite simply in human words. But scripture is also so unique in kind that there is an absolute limit fixed to its comparability with other events, and thus necessarily a clearly drawn limit to the application of philology to the word thus witnessing. If what it conveys is wholly unique then this uniqueness is the central, dominant factor in the statement designed to convey it. In other words this testifying word necessarily implies this content; and, if scripture is to be understood as essentially the word authorized by the Holy Spirit (since only God can speak

adequately of God, only God can say what he means by his revelation), then it must be seen as the Spirit's word about the Word that is the Son; and this, its sublimest aspect, implies a relation to the Trinity. This brings out the partial truth of what Origen says, namely, that the distinction between the testifying word and the Word testified to is an incomplete one. Large tracts of scripture do not merely relate the revelation made by Yahweh to his people through the intermediation of Moses, the kings, the prophets, even the pagans, and finally in the Word that is Christ. They are themselves revelation. In the prayers of the psalmist the Spirit reveals what prayer means for God; the words of the prophets not only indicate a particular historical background, but the core of what God willed to speak is contained in the actual situation through the prophets. The sapiential books do not refer to any historical background but are themselves a tranquil contemplation of the historical revelation, and bring out, in the form of revelation, the goods therein contained. In the New Testament the interaction is still more evident. This alone imparts to the words of scripture not only a unique value in themselves but also a peculiar resonance that carries to every generation and causes a great turbulence in the sea of human words. Something of the uniqueness of the object testified to inevitably belongs to the word that testifies, imparting to it its inner trustworthiness as witness. Something of the logic of the object testified to, above all the cross and the resurrection of Christ, colors the logic of the expression. This has been often noticed, but at the same time seems never to have been adequately treated.

2

The word of the Spirit, which is what scripture is, bears reference to the Word of the Father, which is the Son. The word uttered by the Church in her preaching, a word we directly encounter, originates in this word of the Son, so much so that, in every detail, it refers back to it, represents and expounds it, and impresses it on the hearers. It permits of no independent, definitive sense of its own but, as with the

Church's liturgical sacrifice, only has meaning in relation to Christ's words, acts and being, a meaning brought about in obedience to him. Thereby we gain an unimpaired vision of the reality scripture means to convey as a living tradition (proclamation), and this reality, together with its implications, is the subject of the present study, namely the incarnate Word of God. We may take as our point of departure Christ as Word, that is, preacher and "prophet" of the Father and of his kingdom. As such he implies straightaway the entire revealed word of history since Abraham, indeed since Noah and Adam, for inasmuch as he satisfies all justice, fulfills all the promises, his word, teaching and truth build up into a single whole all that God has shown forth and effected as truth relating to him. Likewise what is, according to his word, also a part of the revealed word can now only be understood as rounding off the exposition of his depth and height and breadth and length—we refer to the theologies of Paul and John, the Acts as the prototype of Church history (to which belong the Catholic epistles by way of completion), and the Apocalypse as the recapitulation of the whole Old and New Testament theologies of history. Further, all that belongs to the Church's official exegesis and every partial manifestation of the fullness of the word of Christ in individual charismatic missions—all this is a palpable result of the living power of the Word exercised over the whole of history.

We only make mention of the historical dimension of the divine utterance in order to see how it centers on the word of Christ. For this indeed is a word spoken by a man to men, understandable by them as a human word, yet, in the opinion of those who heard, a word of one who spoke as no man ever spoke (Jn 7:46), who spoke "as one having power, and not as the scribes" (Mt 7:29). Wherein this power consisted he himself made known: in his being sent by the Father, in his obedience to the Father, so that what he taught was the echo of his Father's teaching, and his whole life, the very flesh and blood that he had assumed, was through his obedience taken up into his word. His word transcended the temporal, reaching up both to God and to his own life; yet it belonged to the general human category, while being at the same time absolutely unique. Had it not come within that category it would not have been human at all, and the Word would

not have been made flesh. Nor would we be able to understand Christ's word in its special mode of transcendence. But we now see what it means for someone to stake his life for every utterance he dares to make, and to say that he means thereby a truth that surpasses his own relative existence and that is absolute. He may fall short of it either in understanding or conduct; still he means it, and he does not necessarily fail it.

Yet the transcendence of Christ's word in reaching out to his own life and to his Father has, with all its humanness, something setting it wholly apart, for to it alone the plenitude of authority was given by the Father. Let us take as an example the parable of the unmerciful servant. Does the word here give us a similitude that, however, wholly transcends the category of similitudes because it springs from a reality already given and made visible by its means, a reality immanent within it? What gives it that force which attaches to every particular application but which is yet only present for one who assents to the reality signified as the basis of the narrative? What but precisely that fact, present behind it all, that Christ is the price paid for the redemption. Each of the words here spoken is, for its utterance to be made at all possible, covered with a warranty sealed in blood. The utmost justice—to the point of delivering the unmerciful servant to the torturers (consider what this means, when God is king)—is also, since behind it lies Christ's sacrifice of body and blood, the adequate expression of the utmost mercy of God. We cannot interpret this story in merely human terms, merely ethically, nor, despite its severity, merely as "Old Testament" in tone. It must be accepted as told by Christ making his way toward the cross; in fact the verse that follows speaks of his return to Judea (Mt 19:1). The parable form is preserved and, at the same time, transcended. It is preserved insofar as there is a story with a formal correspondence between it and what it signifies; transcended because here the similitude does not indicate the reality, as is the case with poetic parables, but the reality directly points to itself in the similitude, creates its own breathing space.

This transcendence is the despair both of philology and psychology. Both of these, relying on the doctrine of the incarnation, according to

which everything belonging to Christ's human activities proceeds in a wholly human fashion, claim the existence of a sphere which, for the time being, is not transcended in favor of what is wholly unique. This sphere however does not exist, therefore both can only propound their judgments while they themselves are, at a deeper level, the objects of judgment. It is not as though they were not allowed to carry out their work to the end and then have to interrupt it at a certain point when the mystery begins. The mystery, for that matter, begins at the outset so that if they want to pursue their objects to the end no one stops them. The question is simply whether, once they realize that they are wholly subject to the judgment of the word, which they proposed to judge, they must begin all over again in faith.

Does this then mean a total collapse of scientific procedure, and imply that it is absurd to include theology as one of the faculties? Apprehending this conclusion theologians take refuge in a theory of "two storeys". On the lower level is the Jesus of history, exhaustively analyzed both philologically and psychologically, while on the upper storey is the word of Christ as Son of the Father, the object of faith, both communal and individual—as if there were in Christ anything comprehensible in human terms that was not to be interpreted, from the outset, in function of his divine mission. This methodical schizophrenia is the counterpart of the cleavage in the individual inquirer who, though believing, is still a sinner. But even so, it is inadmissible since what determines the method is not the inquirer but the object. This object is Christ whose word, if it is to be at all understood in its content and intention, comprises both the cross and his mission by the Father. For the cross guarantees the truth of his words by the sacrifice of his own life, and the mission guarantees that his sacrifice is not that of a fanatic, but an act of obedience to a divine commission. We see that there is a connection between word, cross and commission that is of its very nature wholly unique, a logic thought out *ad hoc*, or better, *ad hunc*, and applying to this case alone but with ineluctable necessity.

It is especially in John that the uniqueness of the logic of Christ's words comes out, formulated as it is in an almost abstractly scien-

tific way. There we have presented a clear gradation between the primary proof of the truth of the word and a secondary, supplementary process. The former rests on the analytical connection between the truth of the word (for example "I am the light of the world", "I am the resurrection") and the sacrifice of body and blood, both being understood as obedience to the Father and as self-revelation of the Father—a perception which leads directly to faith and which issues from faith in a mysterious, living identity. But if anyone, through some spiritual weakness, some resistance to the truth arising out of sin, lacks the power to follow this christological logic and to yield to its evidence, another way opens to him, one which is given first place in Christian apologetics: that of miracles and prophecy. This is the argument for belief in the uniqueness of the all-fulfilling Word in the Son from the evidence of the relationship between promise and fulfillment, between the charisma proclaimed (prophecy) and the charisma manifested (miracle) (Lk 4:18). It accords with the logic of the redemptive process where, instead of dwelling on the unique character of the central feature and letting conviction follow from having seen the justness of its structure, we turn to the various factors connected with the preparation, the earlier stages and pointers; these can only be understood, individually as well as collectively, if interpreted as promises of something to come, and this is only possible after the fulfillment has taken place. The overwhelmingly clear proof which God bestows on those of lesser insight is the correspondence between the Old Testament and the New, a most remarkable thing, so wide and manifold as to be exemplified in countless instances. It is in virtue of the sovereignty of the Son of God that he assigns this historical consideration to the second place. It is not his will to be argued to from premises outside himself, for he is the truth which bears all evidence in itself, and which is susceptible to no comparison other than with itself. The whole economy of the two Testaments consists in applying the essential truth of the incarnation to the whole range of human history; this is not just something accidental, exterior, made for apologetic purposes, a concession to human need. Consequently the first thing to be made clear is that the Father has given all power to the Son,

and that what he fulfills, namely the promise, derives from him its persuasive force.

It is necessary to insist that, in addition, the perception of the "harmonies of the two Testaments" (Charlier) is far superior, as a mode of comprehension, to the methods of philology and psychology, as these themselves show us (unfortunately, we may say) only too plainly. Whatever natural precondition is required for understanding *this* logic of revelation, it does not consist in a fine discrimination of philological minutiae, but rather in a feeling for form, a sense of the proportions of the whole, of the relative importance of detail, not only in regard to sensible but also to spiritual reality. The great spiritual writers who have made this the focal point of their theology—Irenaeus, Origen (with his enormous influence in both the East and the West), Augustine, Rupert, Pascal, Newman—all had this esthetic sense and outlook. Certainly this does not mean that it is possible to prescind from faith in cultivating a biblical esthetic productive of factual results. All it means is that God, for the understanding of the truths of faith, calls upon all the cognitive powers of man, and that the coarse-grained philology to which the Old Testament makes no appeal, as being "unmodern", is only dumb in its regard because of a want of sensibility.

The argument from Christ as manifested in scripture has, all through history, both ecclesiastical and secular, refuted with a truly divine irony all the insidious suggestions of his enemies. It is so cogent because the recorded facts rule out the alternative: either Son of God or else purely man of the highest religious perceptions. It compels this other alternative (as philology and psychology might propose): either Son of God or else the hallucinatory invention of enthusiastic followers, God's Son or psychopath. Anyone who thinks "religious genius" is a sufficient explanation has certainly not read the New Testament objectively. All attempts to bring the unique figure of Christ within general laws miscarry; they fall back for an explanation on deception or mental disorder, as the Jews did once and have always done (Mt 28:15; Jn 8:48).

3

We only need to contemplate the mystery of the union of the divine and human in Christ from the other aspect in order to perceive its entire implication. In Christ there is nothing human (we speak of course of the *actus humani*, not of the *actus hominis*) that is not the utterance and expression of the divine; and likewise there is nothing divine that is not communicated and revealed to us in human terms. This applies not only to all the acts of the public life, his preaching, founding of the Church, passion and resurrection, but equally to his hidden acts, his prayer to the Father, his obedience, his love for the Father unto death. It is precisely this inner aspect that is most essential, definitive, in the whole economy of the redemption. For it is not true that the acts and states of the Redeemer, by which he makes for redeemed humanity a new spiritual and heavenly home, are only partially human acts (that is to say, a subordinate part therefore), while those where the human nature as such falls short of the divine call for the intervention of the higher nature, that of the God-man. That would be pure Arianism. The acts and states by which Christ redeems us are genuine human acts, from the lowest to the highest; and though they are never solely human they are always human. Scholasticism, for purposes of classification, confines the idea of *religio* to certain bounds; but once we free it from these and set it in the light of the adoration to be given in spirit and truth, self-surrender in faith, hope and charity, everything by which Christ signifies his love to the Father and to men is an *actus religionis*.

These acts then, as we have just emphasized, are not to be exhaustively explained by derivation from the "abstract" nature, man. At the same time it is obvious that, despite the uniqueness of Christ as divine and human, they are still acts of a man who to be man must fall within the range of the "abstract" term man. Consequently there is no question of applying to Christ a definition which would distinguish him as man essentially from other men, setting him apart for instance as "man *for* his fellowmen", as opposed to "us others" who are only "men *with* our fellowmen". In any case such an account of what Christ and other men are respectively only brings out the specifically

social, horizontal function of human nature, prudently omitting its relation to God; and besides, it makes, if we examine the argument closely, Christ and the rest of men share a common nature only analogously, not univocally. The "ordinary", "normal" man is a self-contained person, and this fact confines his relationship with his fellowmen to certain limits. He cannot be their representative before God, still less offer himself as a sacrifice for them, or feed them with his own substance, his flesh and blood. Christ's humanity on the other hand is, from the outset, a function of his divine Person and so a fit instrument for all those acts which are required for the redemption of mankind. Because of this, and since, in spite of all, Christ's humanity must be designated a pure humanity, it could well be maintained that the rest of men become, in Christ, competent as regards acts to which they are not fitted by their own human nature.

The above-mentioned theology of man fails, on a decisive point, to take full account of the incarnation. In becoming man Christ falls into the universal category of man, and so Paul's expression "found as a man" (Phil 2:7) implies an identity of nature persisting, regardless of the analogy conveyed by the *κένωσις*, even in the greatest of his acts as God-man; and in this precisely consists the taking of man's nature into the unity of the God-man in order to redeem it. It certainly follows that the acts of Christ—being acts of his human nature, and therefore insofar as the man Christ manifests his *religio* toward the Father in adoration and obedience during his agony in the garden—are truly acts of natural religion. They are not merely natural religion, but this is no reason for denying that they are *also* natural religion; it does mean that we have both the right and the duty to affirm natural religion as necessarily implied in christology. Were this not so then the *religio* of Christ must have seemed supernatural in a way inconsistent with the ordinariness, lowliness and accessibility he showed in his human relations. He must have seemed quite other than those quasi-divine wise men and religious founders in his capacity for acts beyond ordinary human nature. Then his summons could only have involved a misconception, and the Twelve, on being asked "Will you also go?" would have had to withdraw—at any rate after his promise to make his flesh and blood the food of all, a thing absolutely

supernatural. Of course they did not dream of "imitating" him in such incomprehensible acts, nor did he demand that they do the exact same thing as he. Nonetheless, he did not intend their following of him to be no more than a mirroring of his acts in a different sphere, one appropriate to *their* humanity. He meant it to be a real identification with him, and this despite all the emphasis he laid on the uniqueness of his Sonship. This is what we now have to consider.

When we say that Jesus, as man, performs the acts of religion, the expression "as man" means that he does so not only as exemplar but as a model, not only as *filius unicus* but as *primus inter filios pares*. This implies that the act of religion is an act of man as such, apart from which it would be impossible to understand either the incarnation or the redemption. It would amount to losing sight of man's elevation through Christ to community with the divine nature, were Christ as exemplar to be emphasized to the detriment of him as model, or the equality of nature stressed to the point of forgetting the uniqueness of his Sonship, which predestines him, in an altogether different way from Adam, to be the head of mankind and makes him draw all things (Jn 12:32) in heaven and earth (Eph 1:10) into his unique status (visibly expressed in his being raised up on the cross). The elevating, transforming and creative power of the *gratia capitis* is so great that, between the *religio* appropriate to human nature as such and that offered to man through the grace of redemption, the only relation is one of analogy; any relation less than this is inadmissible. And though human nature was impaired by sin, still, despite all its disastrous consequences, *this* analogy is not annulled. All it means is the inhibition (seen constantly in the individual) of an ever-present essential function. No other interpretation of the guilt persisting in mankind is possible.

The analogy between natural and revealed religion is conceived correctly and in accordance with what revelation itself tells us only on two conditions. We must neither deny the existence of natural religion nor see it as self-contained and sufficient. It must be taken, according to the intention of the creator of the natural order, as of its very nature an initial stage. This means that God, in the order of creation, truly began what he was to perfect in the order of Christ's

redemption; began, that is to say, in the sense of establishing an enduring initial stage wherein what is begun does not imply a reaching beyond itself (a *desiderium naturale visionis, sive efficax sive inefficax* [a natural desire for the beatific vision, whether efficacious or not]), nor (what comes to the same thing) claim to be understandable only when raised to the order of grace. Neither is its incorporation into the final synthesis to be held dependent on its essence being considered merely as a "promise" of something of a higher order. Such conceptions would impair and even exclude the freedom of grace as God's self-revelation to the creature, God's freedom to enter into a covenant with a people chosen at his discretion. To speak of continuity between the two orders is in fact highly misleading and, sooner or later, involves making grace (even as *medicinalis*) an epiphenomenon of nature.

We can speak of "implication" in this connection only in the sense of nature (that is, human nature) being taken into a mode of being it cannot attain of itself—since this mode is divine and unique and thus only accessible through Christ, God and man—without having to be completed in its own order, its "substantiality", as regards a missing part: namely, religion. Nature possesses a predisposition for this superadded mode by reason of its inchoate character. This character however does not consist in a Platonist longing after grace and the vision of God, a longing that includes a latent claim to these. Nor is this predisposition a constant attitude of resignation and indifference to what is to come on the ground that no one can see into the divine counsels. What it means is active readiness, the expression of the true essence of creatureliness, for every possible initiative on the part of God's will without at the same time anticipating it. This readiness was taken up and fulfilled by Christ, which shows exactly what analogy here means.

We cannot conclude this line of thought without exhibiting the analogy as one of personality and so of the uniqueness of the individual. Uniqueness enters into the very essence of man, so much so that it must be taken into consideration even when we view him in the abstract. So it was that Hegel was obliged to find room in his metaphysics for history in the concrete; and only so was it possible for

the only-begotten of the Father to become a man among men. And in him the uniqueness of each individual rises superior to its precarious situation in time, and so attains to the "Father's house" and the coinheritance.

4

Now at last we can profitably consider another implication, already alluded to in section 2, namely the Christian and ecclesiastical existence implied in that of Christ. This subject, like all others broached here, is far too extensive to be treated fully; we must be content to indicate its place in the general ensemble. If the relationship between nature and grace, as seen from the aspect of the incarnation, almost defies expression in rational terms, this is even more the case here. Previously it was a question of seeing one reality being imparted through a higher one in such wise that the latter, in its sovereign freedom, bestows a mode of being, a selfness, to which the self as nature has no claim; yet this self had from the outset been formed in view of this new being. Now we are concerned with how God's Word in Christ arranges a participation in himself in such a way that the participator thereby realizes himself at the deepest level of his being, attains self-knowledge in the unique relationship of member to head. The similes of head and members, of vine and branches, are taken from the natural, subspiritual order and so are only pointers to the reality, not the reality itself. The members and branches have their own personality and responsibility for their acts, and thus are bound by ethics and religion. Their obligations are by no means superseded by reason of the event represented by the two similes, nor through the supervention of the order of sin and its debilitating effects. We are concerned here not so much with the latter as with the accord between ethical and religious ideals and the soteriological fact: what the Christian is obliged to bring about is granted him by Christ as already effected, without however removing the necessity for striving after perfection. What this means is most clearly seen in the special

case of the apostles. They were entrusted with the word of God, with proclaiming not the bare word but the word along with its characteristic powers. The authority to speak included the messianic power to work miracles, as if to show that this conjunction of word and deed was not the specific mark of Christ who alone, in virtue of being sent by the Father, could equate his existence with the mission received. The disciples received something of this identity by communication from him, and not merely something after the fashion of the credentials given to the prophets of the Old Testament. The holiness attributed by Paul to the faithful is not that of the synagogue, but a participation of that of Christ, their head. His death and resurrection, as an accomplished fact, was the grace communicated to them, and this primary grace of Christ became the ethical ideal they were called to realize subsequently. Peter received the office of feeding Christ's flock which, because it is Christ's, can only rightly, that is, in Christ's way, be fed by Christ, in whom the priest-shepherd and lamb-victim are one and the same. This is why, immediately after, there followed the prophecy of Peter's following to the death of the cross; an express "follow thou me" is appended to the gift of this conjoined function of Christ (Jn 21:19, 22).

This special case of the apostolic office in the Church throws light on that of the ordinary believer, also sent to live the life of the word. What differentiates Christ and Peter is not for a moment neglected. In fact the Lord of the Church stresses it to the utmost, and thus brings out all the more strongly the paradox of the christological unity so entrusted to him. Furthermore, the theological paradoxes of the relationships between Peter and John, between authority and charity in the Church, brought out at the end of John's gospel, are contrasted (admittedly only in the Catholic interpretation) almost to the point of making them at variance. Nonetheless the effect is not one of fragments lying lifeless and apart, as in the paradoxes of Pascal, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, but of elements bound together by the Head into a formal unity, one of supreme beauty, the beauty of the New Testament bridal Church, realized in Mary and every true case of sanctity. It is a unity free of the tortured complications of human dialectic, possessing the simplicity and directness of the attitude "Behold the

handmaid of the Lord". So perfect is its simplicity as to be almost equated with the human ideal, which indeed it is, but only because it is conceived by God and bestowed by the Son.

Here it is well to remember that being human cannot be expressed simply in the abstract ethical formula "self-perfection in freedom". This striving is inseparable from man's organic nature, whose laws operate in the direction of freedom, though they must be acknowledged and admitted in the patience befitting a created being. It was not in climbing the steep path to "self-perfection" that Mary became a mother, but in self-surrender to God's direct will and to the disposition intrinsic to her womanly nature and to what took flesh within it. In this way the fruitfulness of her faith was conjoined with that of her womb and of her whole being. This shows us how Luther's conception of the act of faith was somewhat restricted in comparison with the older German and Christian accounts wherein the element of surrender and loyal discipleship, the human in other words, was far more prominent than in the Protestant dialectic of sin and grace. If this human factor is not seen as implicit in the holiness of the Church the "naked" soteriological dialectic only too easily reduces faith to an academic abstraction.

5

The last implication we wish to mention (without trying to reach any systematic conclusion) requires, for complete acceptance, a much more thorough exposition; an abbreviated account is almost inevitably misleading. The history of God's dealings with man is wholly centered in Christ, from whom it radiates into two periods of time; starting from him we gain an understanding of all that is disposed in view of him and all that proceeds from and through him.¹ Christ himself often indicated this implication of all that was ordained in view of salvation (Jn 5:46-47; 8:52-58; Mt 22:41-45) and, having accomplished his own part and risen again, expounded it to the infant

¹ I would refer the reader to my *A Theology of History* (New York, 1963).

Church for forty days (Lk 24:44f.). For Paul this implication is identical with the mystery whose servant he has become, and for the author of the Apocalypse it is once again the dramatic meaning of world history. In fact when we speak here of world history we must include a further, and necessary, implication of the whole history of man in the history of salvation. This implication is only too familiar in one way, and yet when examined closely appears a very strange one. Of course we see Christ as the Head elevated above all history who will come again to pass judgment on the living and the dead, and so over the whole course of history. But this hope of ours is wholly eschatological; the gospel admonishes us to watch and persevere in prayer rather than to set about theologizing history. The meaning of history is so dependent on the mind of the Creator and Judge that we cannot determine it in advance.

Yet, since the Word was made flesh, the various histories comprised in that of Christ himself, that of the covenant with Israel, the course followed out by God with his people, all belong, as history, to the content of revelation. The whole patristic and medieval theology of history is based on the idea that the different stages, up to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to the judges and to David, from David to the prophets, from the prophets to postexilic Israel, and from that time to Christ, were actually a progressive revelation; so much so that these stages were taken, in summary fashion, to pertain not only to sacred history but also world history in general. The *ordo et gradus in profectu mundi*, spoken of so frequently and in such detail by Bonaventure and other great Scholastics, was derived from their view of sacred history, but it was also connected with their philosophical reflection on the possible meaning of the general course and progress of history. They saw this as a *processus ab imperfecto ad perfectum* consisting of (1) the eliciting of free acceptance from mankind of the salvation freely given (and so the eliciting of Mary's assent from each successive generation); (2) a corresponding inner understanding of and cooperation with God's plan of salvation together with a longing for its fulfillment, which is elicited from the witnesses, both explicit and implicit, and figures of the Old Testament; (3) an ever-deeper embodying of grace in the world in its historical course,

so as to penetrate it in its own created being and guide it to its true home, and so to attain to the incarnation of God—*Deus cum limo*—the *integritas universi* (see *Breviloquium* 4, fourth ed., *Quar* 5, 244).

It may be objected that this theology of history is necessarily confined to the time of the Old Testament, the only time when the great stages of salvation could coincide with the different epochs of world history, and that, once the fullness and end of the times are reached in Christ, any subsequent interpretation along these lines of the stages of history is impossible and superfluous. It is true that the older theologians made the whole course of world history fit into the chronology of the Bible, and saw the eschatological consciousness of the New Testament as an awaiting and experiencing of the last, the seventh period of time, the time of Christ, as a brief coda to the preceding. But our consciousness of history extends so much farther in both directions that the old idea of world history implied in the history of the incarnation of the Word is no longer relevant. So nowadays it is the archeologists (Albright) and culture philosophers studying the Near East who assure us that we must not just give up the whole project. Unhampered by the doubts and inhibitions of the theologians, they approach the whole question from the opposite end, from the angle of secular history, and ask what part the Bible plays in the two millennia before Christ, so decisive for the spiritual development of mankind. All that precedes them is but a vast, uncoordinate series of events, of hardly more than biological significance, preceding the real history of culture. What follows is hardly more than the logical outcome of the premises laid down in that period; for it was during those two millennia that the spirit broke through and allowed of the formation of higher cultures and their social structures, their political, religious and esthetic myth; and from these essential prerequisites there finally emerged the birth of abstract ideas, and so of liberty of thought and of the universality of spiritual understanding in the Greek world. It was this period, so decisive for the human destiny of mankind (what Jaspers calls the "axis period") that the historical articulation of the divine revelation occurred, on the one hand pursuing its course in sovereign independence, quite apart from the political and religious designs of the great nations all

around, and on the other not simply rejecting this world of culture but reckoning with it and adapting it. "Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22); the cultural influence of Mesopotamia and Syria on the thought and categories of the Bible need not be emphasized.

The question thus arises, decisive for our subject, whether the historical development that took place in the sphere of the biblical revelation has any sort of inner relationship to the contemporary development in the Near Eastern culture within which the minute state of Israel was embedded. There is no question here of deriving the "progress" in the religious sphere from that in the secular, or of simply proving them parallel. Yet we have to ask whether the clearly visible steps by which the spirit of biblical revelation—in contrast to the rigid conservatism of the Jews—in its own fashion emerges on the plane of the incarnation, form a process having no real bearing on the steps by which the spirit of the world advances from one level of understanding to another until it reaches the plane of a universal human culture in Greece. The question suggests itself more readily if we do not ascribe the biblical revelation and its gradual development solely or even primarily to God acting from outside and above, but rather to the growth of real understanding among the Jewish people of the spiritual consequences arising from a vital religious element present since the time of Abraham and Moses.

There is no reason to regard this question and a possibly affirmative answer as an encroachment of liberalism into theology. It is in fact simply the extension, only now made possible, of one of the central aspects of patristic and Scholastic theology, and more profoundly a necessary outcome of christology in its fullest sense. For the history of the human race, into which the Redeemer inserts himself, is not divided into two clearly separate and distinct histories. There is only one history, that of man from paradise to the last day, and its significance is not exhausted in the fact of Adam's fall and the eschatological redemption through Christ. Nor does the divine seed implanted in world history, there to "die and rise again", wish to establish its own second history alongside the first, but rather to propagate salvation in the one and only history. Let it suffice here only to note this

conclusion and its necessity, though it still requires a great deal of elaboration and analysis. We simply propound a thesis without fully exploring the grounds which support it, but we do so in view of the implications of the Word which, in their interaction, seem to lead to this conclusion. Theology of course cannot, in Hegelian fashion, reach a full clarification of the meaning of world history, which would make Christ's judgment superfluous. But it can reach the decisive conclusion that if secular history in its temporal ramifications is proved to be of real consequence in the biblical sphere, it cannot, in its secular meaning, be indifferent as regards sacred history, for it has *in its totality* been impregnated through and through by the Word.

A similar relationship holds good between the categories (we might say the archetypes) of the natural religious reason and the biblical teaching of the living God and the unique redeemer of mankind. This was brought out with increasing force from Justin and the Alexandrians up to Eusebius, from whose time it was never lost to view. A purely passive "hearing reason" is self-contradictory; thus man's thought of God, even when allowance is made for the excessive presumption of reason tainted by original sin, cannot persist without some rudimentary system in which it tries to represent the relations between God and man in the events of history. What happens perforce is that the word of God, in replacing the false gods, condemns and indeed scorns the material content of man's ideas of the Godhead, but nonetheless takes over for its own use the bare framework, and thus, on occasion, even preserves (in the economy of grace) something of the content. Why should the sapiential books and the Epistle to the Hebrews not employ the language and modes of thought of Platonist cosmology and theology to reveal the truth of what Plato dimly envisaged? Why should Paul not use the language of those whom he addressed in explaining the mystery of Christ to the Ephesians or the Colossians? To his mind it was only necessary to see the myth of these Jewish Gnostics aright, that is, in the critical light of the actual events of the life of Christ, in order to make clear that it too had some intimation of the truth. At the same time he held that Christ's redemptive acts must be seen in the light of the myth for only then does one aspect of the truth emerge, namely that the law, its enmity, the crushing of this

enmity by Christ, all had a cosmic scope, affecting in other words the whole universe of being; that these are not merely moral but ontological phenomena. Such is Schlier's interpretation of the mind of Paul, and he goes on to say:

Formally and basically, what Paul's interpretation of the Gnostic ideas amounts to is their adaptation to the apostolic message. This process of continual reinterpretation carried out, consciously, in the apostolic mind, indeed in Christian thought generally, is a sign of a consistent essential correspondence in the objective order. For why should we not be allowed to do as regards the Gnostics what is accepted as regards the Jews? Probably we have here a latent dogmatic prejudice ... (*On Eph* 133).

Furthermore, why should John not pour out the content of his singular visions into the mold of contemporary apocalyptic speech? This is what the Catholic epistles did in large measure, and what Christ himself did not scorn to do. It is not just a matter of literary form, a choice of one rather than another equally good, as a comparison with the texts of the Torah makes clear; but this is no reason to treat the matter shamefacedly. For it should not be too difficult to ascertain the correct mean between a theology which admits the necessity of myth on the grounds that sinful reason cannot do other than construct idols, and so be unable to discard them in its theology, and a liberal theology which fails to attribute to God's word the final judgment in the confrontation. A theology that discards natural judgment cannot escape it, since the Bible is about natural religion. Such a theology may attempt to relegate it to the forecourts of philology and archeology, *tamen usque redibit*. But we may then be thankful for the difficulty of the problem which sends us, when we tire of philosophizing, back again to look at the theology of the Bible.

GOD SPEAKS AS MAN

Through the liturgy the priest makes contact only with Catholics, and among them only with the small number of those practicing. The liturgy has now become the preserve of an elite; and since we intend to show here the close bond between liturgy and preaching, liturgy and scripture reading, it may seem that real contact with the word must be confined to this narrow, esoteric circle. If so we would be approximating, where the liturgy is concerned, to the *disciplina arcani* of the Fathers, and so instilling in the people the idea that the word establishes for itself a sacred sphere to which access is given only to the practicing believer.

This conclusion—no product of the imagination, but one to which the present situation actually tends—is accompanied by an attitude of resignation which runs counter to the true nature of the Christian way of life. Christianity does not admit of any partiality or easily drawn frontiers; its impulse is always toward development and universalism. Esoterism is often the outcome of a psychological state of disquiet and fear. To combat this state—often disguised as a concern for the sacred—it is essential to examine fearlessly the supernatural revealed truths of Christianity in the light of the sciences that have man as their object; these include philology, sociology and psychology. God, in becoming man and taking man into his trinitarian life, did no violence to human nature; in founding a new community centered on his incarnation it was not in spite of the laws of sociology, and religious sociology in particular. Consequently it cannot be disputed that the “religion” we contend to be the only true one is in one of its aspects on the same sociological plane as “other” religions. The Bible is *the* sacred book but it is one among other sacred books, for each religion has its own. And every religion not only has its own liturgy but its practitioners endeavor to adduce in support of even the slightest religious observances a formal declaration of its will on the part of the Godhead. This general law is exemplified in the priestly code, which refers temple worship in all its details to the express instructions of

Moses, even to the supernatural vision of the heavenly sanctuary he received on the holy mountain (Ex 25-31, 40). Likewise, each religion has its own tendency to esotericism. These are not just vague similarities but the outcome of a fundamental trait persisting in human nature everywhere. Nor should they cause us apprehension. Rather we should be glad, for they furnish evidence for the true incarnation, the "humanization" of God.

When God becomes man then man as such becomes the expression, the valid and authentic expression of the divine mystery. Certainly man needs supernatural faith to understand what God in his sovereign freedom wills to proclaim in his spontaneous self-revelation. All the same, this divine meaning is never something external and alien to man, who is indeed elected to be its expression. God is love. This he has testified to us as man, and so the two commandments of love can and must, in Christ, coalesce into one. In other words God, in revealing his own countenance to man, has also disclosed to him his own human countenance. God is under no sort of necessity to make use of man for his own self-revelation; but once he has decided on this and done so in an incarnation, all human dimensions, known and unknown, are taken up and used to express the absolute person. Consequently the Christian religion, though it is from the sociological point of view but one among others, must necessarily embrace the totality of human nature; only thus can it be acknowledged as truly catholic.¹

Humanism within Christianity is indeed the central theme of our time, one which occupies the minds of all. It is the question above all others which the laity is most concerned with in its dialogue with non-Christian and nonpracticing brethren. At a time when the unity of the world is in the process of taking shape, it is a problem calling

¹ This statement is not inconsistent with the fact that the universalist tendency we claim for revealed religion has itself a sociological aspect. Every religion (especially if it is grounded on revelation) must necessarily lay claim to universality and uniqueness. We can never isolate, in the religion of Christ, its divine and supernatural uniqueness from the universality which implies its extension to the whole human sphere.

for a comprehensive and bold solution. Paradoxically it comes to meet us as a consequence of the stirring biblical discoveries of recent years. Let us dwell on these for a moment.

The analogies between revealed religion and its neighboring cultures have, in our own day, come sharply to light, and more and more points of dependence are evident. Much that previously seemed purely supernatural we now see as part of mankind's collective religious inheritance. On the other hand, it is precisely these discoveries that have given us a better understanding of the mysteries of revelation. Perhaps today we understand better the mystery of Israel than did the Christians of the past, better too the apostolic age in its Jewish and Hellenistic environment. The more clearly we discern the concrete and historical reality the more does revealed truth in all its profundities open itself to our view; in this we perceive one of the great anti-Gnostic laws, a law of the incarnation. The more Christ shows himself as in solidarity with every human word, every human act and thought, the more clearly he stands out from them as unique, as he who comes from above, empowered (without thereby being liable to the charge of madness or blasphemy) to utter the unheard-of words that no other man could venture: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" "My words shall not pass away", "The Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven. . . ."

Let us look at the problem in the simplest way possible. To understand how far God has gone in using human ways of speaking, the structure of the latter must first be outlined; an understanding of this involvement, however, presupposes that we know what it expresses, namely a human experience. We treat therefore first of human experience, second of human speech, and third of the eternal Word, incarnating itself in a man speaking in order to transform the man himself into a divine utterance.

I

What is the specific form that human experience takes?² Man is essentially a historical being. His spirit comes to its fullness in time, in a single, irreversible curve that leads him through an uninterrupted succession of states, childhood, youth, maturity and age, though no one of these can assure attainment of the next. There is a definite logic in this sequence, though as Paul reminds us a certain alogical element is involved: death; time, as a rushing toward a final catastrophe, contains an element of futility, of nothingness, but this element itself is contained in a higher logic of grace in that God leans down over the abyss for which the creature, not the Creator, was responsible. This only intensifies the sharp, searing pain of our existence; every stage of life, every situation requires that we let go of it and transcend it. Yet each signifies for us a gift that never returns, something that mirrors the absoluteness of eternal duration. Maturity can never replace or even contain within itself the vision of the world that is disclosed to the fresh gaze of the child, at a time when the world was all new, something innocent, paradisaical, full of marvels, supernatural and natural at once, so that everything was possible, everything near to God. The longing for irrecoverable childhood is not just romantic: it can also have, as Péguy and Bernanos have shown, a deep Christian basis. In fact, the Christian miracle consists in regaining the fullness of temporal duration. Entering the Church through the gates of baptism is a fresh entry upon paradise, only available to children, by the "little way" which permits us to "redeem" the failure of time past. This Christian miracle does not destroy the historical nature of man: *non destruit naturam*. The losses associated with time as nonentity are not eliminated, and only inasmuch as both, seemingly contradictory, aspects are lived out do the Christian life

²We are concerned here with the form, since within the limits of an essay we cannot enter into the content of this experience, the existent with its background of being in general, or into the dimensions of the spirit in its knowledge of itself and others.

and its experience of childhood recovered in growing old come to fulfillment.³

Man, however, is not just a child. Youth comes with its enthusiasms, fears and despondencies, the first experience of man's hidden depths, along with the tragic moment when a call is heard and the man, though apparently too young, makes his life's choice of a vocation and status in a moment that never recurs—a great gain but also a great loss. Choice presupposes freedom, but also hope, trust, surrender. Faith, hope and love appertain to man, and so also does the act of self-surrender in his maturity, of self-sacrifice for a duty, of finding the whole in the part. It belongs to him to experience the joy and the venture of responsibility and even the bitter consolations of failure, which show him that he is not a being apart but one among his fellows. Every one of his states offers the same view into the future, and the same striving to embody in a single whole his ceaseless flight toward the future. Thus the present becomes a qualitative synthesis of the whole of time, and is characterized by the ever-changing relationships between past and future.

Time, then, is by no means a uniform flux. It has moments of mysterious import, heights where man attains freedom for himself. In his best moments he encounters his true image, his vocation and the grace it brings. If he accepts the duty placed before him that moment fills his time like a continuously moving present, and gives it a coherent, significant structure; but if he rejects it all that time has built for him will be lost. Faith, hope, love, this is what constitutes the existential form of the spirit in time, and every attempt to understand one's life must start from the fact that, outside the "little child hope" (Péguy) that lies between surrender in faith and the love that gives and loses itself, we have nothing to expect. Any attempt to pass beyond the glory and misery of "these three" (*tria haec*)—which is what every non-Christian religion strives after—only leads to an unprofitable gnosticism.

The life of peoples follows a similar logic. What they are they can

³ See the very stimulating book by Jean Mouroux, *The Christian Experience* (New York, 1954).

only understand by looking at themselves in the light of the future and by using their memory of the past as a mirror. The measurable portion of their existence, their past history, gives a certain justification to their future; they see in their past certain points of comparison, promises in part fulfilled. And since this section of their lives yields a certain, however fleeting meaning, the hope that all races of men have a hidden collective meaning in time may not be wholly illusory.

This law, valid for all peoples, is applicable to history in general since no man's or people's future and past can escape involvement with the destiny of mankind as a whole. For this very reason it applies of necessity to sacred history as the sum total of the dialogue between God and his chosen people. Surely there must be present in the Bible what the Fathers call the *diastema* of our existence, the fundamental polarity and nonidentity of our experiences, the transition from one standpoint to the other. God himself has taken on the glory and humiliation of temporal existence; thus it is impossible to abstract the form of temporality from revealed truth for the sake of clinging to a barren system of timeless truth.

Let us recall one or two outstanding examples. Hosea speaks of the days "when Israel was a child". What a feeling of homesickness is conveyed in the phrase! Here we have a tender recollection of childhood, not merely of a paradisaal, prehistorical time but of one which really was, when all was fresh, pure and perfect in the relations between Israel and its God.

If there was no remembrance of a lost origin how could mankind hark back to it constantly through all the vicissitudes of history? Had there been no Abraham's grave in the promised land how could his descendents have let themselves be led by God to turn their backs on the fertile land of Egypt and to plunge into the desert of Sinai? Some of the psalms keep the memory of the original grace of the exodus so fresh that the episodes connected with the conclusion of the covenant are never mentioned. It is still the time of pure grace; the law is not yet. And when they do speak of the tremendous event of the covenant made before the flaming mountain, in the blood poured out between the people and the altar, and of the absolute commitment then first engaged, they present the law itself as grace, as some-

thing of absolute truth and strength, something necessary and possible to man.

This vivid sense of Israel's origins was no dream or myth, however much it might have become overladen in later years with nostalgia and sorrow. But we must see how remote it is from the theology of Deuteronomy, of Judaism and finally of Paul if we are to gain some notion of the inevitable decline of an idea and an ideal. For in the meantime a thousand years of experience of sin had intervened; Sion had been unfaithful, not only in isolated acts from which she could have recovered, but habitually, irretrievably. Could the law be kept at all? Did it in fact spring from God, or from some kind of intermediate being? It may well be good "in itself" but is it good "for me"? The pivot on which the whole of experience should revolve had been to some extent displaced in the time of the kings and prophets, and fully so during the time of the exile, of the sapiential and apocalyptic books. Much patience is needed if we are to assign both their absolute and relative value to all the experiences recorded in sacred history, for in their very diversity they condition one another. The changing standpoint of different situations must be taken into account if each of them is to be understood, but the change of standpoint is itself ambiguous. On the one hand temporal existence is to be understood in relation to the future, like a book whose pages we turn as we read, so that the final synthesis, Paul's and John's conception of Christ, is something more perfect and comprehensive than, say, the ideas contained in the Pentateuch. At the same time every temporal accretion entails, infallibly, a definite loss. There are parts of the Old Testament which have greater force and life in themselves than in their New Testament application and conception, and Christ insistently turns the minds of his followers back to these origins, so powerful in their workings and so fundamental.

We see then how a human law applies to sacred history and to its record in the Bible. A present experience can only have truth and validity if conjoined with a definite vision and insight into the past and the future, with our central ideas framed within the memory, which serves as a guideline. The Bible is full of this kind of projection into its own historical past; and in its absence the Bible does not

contain a full human truth. On the other hand, it is not impaired by the inevitable gaps in the exposition.

It would be easy enough and even incorrect to allege that the Jews had constructed their own past and prehistory on the lines of their much later experiences, and that the scholar's duty is to separate the real facts of their origins from the general compound of fable and truth. On the contrary, it should be admitted that the writers of the time of the kings and the great prophets and in the "fiery trial" of the exile could be wholly trusted to interpret the history objectively, to give the true sense of past events, which could well be understood better by those who came after than by those who had lived through them. The more Israel learned in faith to know and hope for the final goal of the future, the more clearly did the original point of departure appear through the images of its historic and fabled past.

It is perfectly in accord with the structure of human truth that a historic past (not a kind of myth to be demythologized) should, through the images projected (as in the story of paradise and the accounts of the patriarchs), guide a people toward its future, and that an early intuition of and encounter with the living God such as no other people experienced should have determined the historical, messianic and eschatological future of Israel.

Thus the truth of the Bible can only be grasped in the context of a whole life's course. Unexpectedly we here come up against the old spiritual and Catholic interpretation of scripture. Each sentence contains overtones of the whole; each word bears reference to the whole. The individual text itself can be seen passing through the successive stages and experiences they contain. Thus it has been proved that certain episodes of patriarchal times and even earlier were uprooted, wholly or in part, from their original life setting and inserted into the context of new religious experiences by the Yahwists or one of their successors. Another example is Psalm 21, which may have been composed by one of Yahweh's oppressed followers in the circle round Jeremiah. It was then taken over into liturgical use, where the personal note of hope for liberation was given a social and universal significance, until finally, through the wonderful later addition which refers the whole purport of the text to the future, it gained its

messianic application. The individual calling to his God becomes the oppressed people, who in turn become the oppressed at the end of time, embodied in the figure on the cross, expiring with this psalm on his lips.

These various relationships and correspondences elicited with the passage of time do not impair the truth of the Bible. On the contrary it was the divine word that took hold of them as a definite proof of its truth. And the truth of a living thing always lies in its totality. A man in making a definite choice sees himself confronted by the question: are you, in acting thus, being true to your first vision and your ultimate hope? Are you in accord with your highest self? In the same way God's sharp, piercing word to Israel is always necessarily bound up with the past and the future. It creates history in that it produces *in* it the truth. It not only promises the future but exhibits it through the fulfillments already brought about. The logic of the vertical impingement of God's word on history must necessarily also be a logic that uses the life of the people for the purpose of its attaining justification.⁴

This is particularly evident in the relationship of the two Testaments which, for the biblical personages, for Christ himself and for the Fathers of the Church was always considered the fundamental, inexhaustible proof of the truth of God's word. But the great correspondence of the two Testaments is only the supreme instance among countless other relationships and similarities and reproductions, such as those between the pre- and postmosaic religion, between the law and the prophets, between institution and event, between the historical and the sapiential books, between secular history and apocalyptic vision, between the gospel and apostolic or Church history. The Old Testament as a whole and not only in isolated, apparently messianic texts was prophetic of the New, just as Christ and the apostles

⁴ The supreme example, the annunciation to Mary, the queen of patriarchs and prophets, is also the clearest. The mystery of the divine decree is thrice proclaimed in an abrupt, vertical fashion (Lk 1:28, 31, 35), and then inserted in the horizontal course of sacred history, whereby for Mary the absolute obedience demanded of her becomes comprehensible in human terms (Lk 1:32-35, 36). There too we have the eschatological aspect (1:33), as also the revelation of the life (1:28, the Father; 31, the Son; 35, the Spirit).

continually refer to the old law in order to vindicate thereby the whole range of effects produced by the incarnation.

Intermittently, scripture seems to give the impression of deliberate inconsistency, of apparent inconsequentiality, so as to make us see that certain words and episodes derive from very remote sources, are susceptible to a wealth of interpretations and manifold applications.⁵ No work in the whole literature of the world has, even from the human standpoint, such a prodigious perspective as the Bible. A single utterance echoes a hundredfold. Centuries of religious experience grew up around it before a single word came to us, and ceaseless meditation has, in response to the infinity of the divine Word, come to endow even its human organ with a kind of corresponding infinity. From this we see that tradition in great part must antedate scripture. Scripture records and completes the living history of the revelation which comes to pass in man's experience of God.⁶

From this a further conclusion follows. The Fathers of the Church, along with Paul and the evangelists, saw the Old Testament almost exclusively as a prelude to the New, something essentially imperfect to be superseded by the coming revelation, and this quite apart from Israel's rejection of the Messiah, by which it ceased to be the people of God. But we must not forget that Christ came to fulfill the millenary religious experience of the Jewish people. In him continued to live the faith of the fathers of Israel, and in this faith the Word of God was always living and, as it were, incarnate by anticipation. And if this faith of the fathers pointed from the outset to the Messiah, it was nevertheless firmly rooted in its constantly renewed origin, in Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets. Christ, both as man and as the Son of God, fulfilled the religion of the people in absolute fidelity to it. This

⁵ In this connection we come up against the old controversy about the plurality of the senses of scripture. Gerhard von Rad in his commentary on Genesis (Philadelphia, 1961) brings out convincingly how the Yahwist, in adopting a new order for recording the various occurrences and experiences, thereby avoids attaching to them any one meaning to the exclusion of others. He leaves the matter open, points out what is incomplete and leaves the reader to make the synthesis.

⁶ As Bouyer shows in his outstanding book *La Bible et l'Évangile* ("Lectio Divina" 8, 1951), whose subtitle "Du Dieu qui parle au Dieu fait homme" sums up the trend of this essay.

faith of Abraham's as the type of all faith, the faith of Sinai with its assent to the living law as the sign of the promise and the ever-present guidance of Yahweh, the faith of Amos and Isaiah in the rights of the poor, the peaceable and the persecuted, the faith of Jeremiah and Job, this certainly was the "faith" of Christ, the Head and Author of our faith, who brings it to fulfillment as ἀρχηγός καὶ τελειωτής τῆς πίστεως (Heb 12:2). His vision of the Father does not in any way prevent his fulfilling the human and basic outlook of all the true servants of Yahweh. How else could the believers in their faith follow Christ? For this faith did not begin with him, nor was he its sole object. It was not merely faith in him but faith together with him, faith in the full biblical sense, that is, in God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who now has revealed himself as God and Father of the Word, who is his Son. The propensity of Christianity to impute to the chosen people an enormity of guilt is to be attributed to its inadequate understanding of the unity of all the truths vouched for in the Bible. The categories of Platonism (material and spiritual sense, type and antitype, analogy and anagogy) do not suffice to encompass this unique living unity. The adolescent (in this instance the early Christian community) thinks he has to turn his back on his childhood and look solely to the future, but the mature man turns his gaze backward to it. With all its faults, the chosen people strove to make its decision for God on our behalf, strove and suffered through the centuries down to the time of Christ—and how much since—for us. We are engrafted in the sacred stem, in a close spiritual unity of life such as is to be found nowhere else in the world, even though the center of this unity is now revealed in Christ.

The dialectical unity between the two opposing poles of love and jealousy, as described by Paul in Romans 9–11, is also the mystery of the redemption of all mankind in Abraham, the father of all believers. At the time when this truth was first proclaimed there was no scripture, tradition, dogma, liturgy, law, priesthood or hierarchy. All this came later, the outcome of the decisive assent of naked man to naked God, who "reputed it to him unto justice". This nakedness of man before God was climaxed on the cross, where the opposition between Jew and pagan, between tradition and nontradition, was

finally concluded and superseded (Eph 2:11f.), but only in an eschatological setting.⁷

There are always further stages on the way to fulfillment. The entrance into the promised land after forty years in the desert was a first fulfillment, but no less so were the exile and scattering of the people, and likewise the Son going about on earth, the Church in its pilgrimage through the desert of the centuries (Apoc 12:14), and each individual believer walking in hope. The whole of scripture is under way, always starting out afresh, wandering through the desert, from image to truth, from promise to fulfillment, from word to flesh, but also from the death of the body to the life of the spirit, moving from the fleshly present (through absence in death and ascension) to the eschatological present: the whole of this truth is a continuous forward striving (*diastasis*); it is the truth of the *cor inquietum*, of hope and love for what is absent. It is into *this* human experience that the divine truth comes to embed itself. This delicate network of temporal relationships is strong enough to hold the absolute truth, which is itself a truth of eternal relations in an eternal life.

Revelation never falls directly from heaven to make supramundane mysteries known to men. God speaks to man from within the world, taking man's own experiences as a starting point, entering so intimately into his creature that the divine *kenosis*, to be fulfilled later in the incarnation, already has its beginning in the word of the Old Testament.

2

The next question concerns the mode of communication devised to correspond to human experience. How does man speak to man? Let us try, first, to describe the essence of the matter in outline.

Human speech is the free manifestation of one's inner personality to others in significant sounds. It comprises three elements:

⁷ See "The Sion Letters" in *The Bridge*, vol. 1 (New York, 1956); also the report on the Judeo-Christian week in Berlin in the June 1957 Herder-Korrespondenz; and finally my own book on Buber, *Martin Buber and Christianity* (New York, 1962).

1. Self-possession on the part of the spiritual person, who is present to himself and so knows his own *truth*. Therefore his utterance is not just a confused sound, an incoherent effort to express an obscure inwardness, but an exact, precise emission. This is precisely what characterizes the utterances of Yahweh in contrast with the mystical babblings and impotent speechlessness at the higher reaches of other religions. "I am the Lord that speaks justice, that declares right things" (Is 45:19).

2. Possession of one's own truth means perfect *freedom*. Consequently the word chosen by the free man to express himself is not determined of necessity. Human speech, with all its bondage to imagery, must rest basically on a free choice of expression. The risen Christ had become, even in his bodily aspect, spiritual, that is to say, free. No longer was he known in a natural, passive fashion but rather gave himself to be known from out himself at any time of his choosing. Herein was the fulfillment of the *verbum caro*, for now human nature in its entirety was at the Word's service to be its expression.

3. In the truth and freedom that follows on self-possession, the personal spirit is the *universal* and *necessary* element, which means that from the outset it goes beyond subjectivity and reaches out to other persons (in principle, every other person), its existence always implying a relationship to them. It means communion and mutual intercourse from the very beginning. Speech therefore is no mere epiphenomenon of man but an integral part of his very being; and the most recent philosophies, those that set out directly from the phenomenon of speech, are the philosophies going to the heart of the matter. According to them the *verbum mentis* that has its source in inmost being, and the love that causes and accompanies it, do not turn the person in on himself (as a superficial interpretation of Augustine's *imago trinitatis* might lead one to think), but rather reveal the mystery of being through the mutuality of knowledge in love. The word of man reveals, if it is true, the very constituents of his being. It is a participation, given from the outset, in being ever irradiated by the Spirit, and so also in the word ever uttered in the heart of being by eternal love. In this word everything was made, everything subsists;

and everything was made with it in view. For human nature (which bears within itself an unfathomable promise) was destined from the first to find its fulfillment in the free revelation and grace of the eternal Word.

But truth, freedom and love are not sufficient to characterize speech as specifically human. It is only human when it transcends itself in two directions, toward its origin in the past and toward its goal in the future.

1. The free spiritual speech of man emerges from the deep-lying interconnection of all parts of nature, revealed for the first time by modern biology and paleontology, which makes man the summit of the whole material and organic creation and its mouthpiece before God. Man as spirit dwells in being in its totality, and likewise through his body he dwells in the whole of nature, and can never detach himself from it. He speaks a corporeal, organic language, one of natural sounds and gestures. Hence there comes about the marvelous and multifarious interplay of nature and spirit in our speech, the gradual transition from natural images to half-emancipated symbols and then to freely chosen signs. These stages of transition from the speech of the whole body (as in the dance) to that of the tongue and distinct syllables, from physiognomy to abstract logic and grammar, all this wealth of resources gives us some idea of what sort of being man is, a being of inexhaustible potentialities. Nor must we forget what modern biology tells us of the speech of animals, the unsuspected exactness of their means of communication with one another, the beginnings of abstraction and the systematization of their expression in the play of gesture, their often highly complex rituals so marvelously approximating to the sign language of primitive man. It is only in our technological age that the confidential relationship between man and nature that bore him has in great part been shattered. The romantics sought to recover this dimension of speech when it was almost extinct; but the attempt came too late. Nonetheless man remains, whether he likes it or not, a part of nature, and he will never wholly free himself from the sphere of natural signs. Mathematical logic will never be a human logic or even its substitute.

In this connection we might mention the sacraments and the liturgy.

Both correspond with man as a part of nature and neither is so much the effect of a free, arbitrary ordinance on the part of God as of an accommodation of divine revelation to the actual laws of creation. Guardini brings out well the intimate relationship between the liturgy and the performance of sacred drama as a function shared both by individuals and all peoples.⁸ We now know that Christ did not introduce any new sacramental signs. He took over baptism from John, the meal of bread and wine from the contemporary assemblies of the devout; and confession, required by the Baptist, is a general human practice to be found in all religions and even in Buddhist monasteries. Anointing with oil and imposition of hands were part of a Jewish ritual in which the liturgy of the Mass was in great part foreshadowed.

2. Now for the second way in which human speech transcends itself, as regards its end. Speech is not its own fulfillment; it is related to life, it is creative and operative. It is itself a beginning of action, and goes beyond itself in its involvement with life and its activities. The time comes when speaking is not enough, when the witness of the whole person is imperative, as in married love, in politics, in the apostolate, in martyrdom. On the human plane truth does not exist without the virtue of truthfulness, which alone shows whether the true, righteous word has measured up to being itself and has not in some way fallen short. Thus in the Bible the whole range of truth (*veritas, veracitas, fidelitas*) is covered by the one word *emeth*. God himself, no less than man, has bound himself by his word. God's word, as well as man's, looks toward what exists. In contrast with dumb idols incapable of a true word because they possess no fidelity and no reality, it bears within itself the witness and power of the living God. And after having long exercised its prophetic office, the word passes into a new stage, that of the eucharist and the passion. This is what John means by "unto the end" (*eis télos*). What the spoken word could not do—it only provoked increasing resistance—was done by the sacrificed Word slowly dissolving in the words of the cross and, finally, fading away in the tremendous, inarticulate

⁸ *Church and the Catholic, and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (New York, 1940).

death cry which sums up all—the spoken and the unspoken and the inexpressible—that God had to communicate to us. Of speaking there might be no end (“the world would not be able to contain the books”), but death puts the full stop. But even of action there might be no end; suffering and death is man’s last word, in which he gathers up his whole being before the Father. It is his testament, the witness and final sealing of his life. His death makes of his lifetime and his word the unity God willed in his grace, which he chose as the highest expression of his own divine unity, the unity of his revelation and of his Trinity of Persons.

Just as we spoke, in connection with the first transcendence of the word and its involvement with nature and its organic activities, of the sacraments and the liturgy, so here also must we speak of them in connection with its second mode of transcendence. For in the sacraments and the liturgy the word of Christ becomes act; his truth, now made evident to us and assured, becomes active and triumphant in us. This second transcendence is attained only in complete self-surrender. There is no Christian liturgy without the sacrifice of the cross; in fact we might say that the two are one and the same.

Therefore man speaks as a free, spiritual person, as one who knows truth; he expresses both nature and himself in his concrete existence. It is this speech that God has chosen as his means of revelation. This means that revelation presupposes in the created order a fundamental analogy of being; but analogy is described (according to the Fourth Lateran Council) as “*in tanta similitudine major dissimilitudo*.” For as we have shown the free speech of man presupposes a speech of nature devoid of freedom, since man is a corporeal and organic being. But between God and the world there is no necessary bond of union; creation, revelation, redemption are all absolutely free decisions of God. Yet there is a real analogy governing this sphere. Man’s spiritual speech presupposes the speech of nature, and the speech of revelation presupposes for its part the speech of God’s creation, in fact this analogy of being, and in consequence a natural knowledge of God, or expressed in religious terms a natural, concrete sense of the creature for the being from which it proceeds, a *cognitio per contactum* (Thomas), which persists through each individual existence and the whole his-

torical course of peoples and cultures. The analogy goes even further; for as the free word of the spirit represents, in relation to the speech of nature (the speech of animals or infants for example), a completely new stage, so also does the free speech of God when he reveals himself by intervening in human history. He comes as the subject who is sovereign, teaching, acting, choosing and rejecting, judging and giving grace, according to laws known to him alone and not derivable from the existing laws of existence or of history. And yet the existence of such freedom of utterance is experienced by man before divine revelation makes use of it. It is precisely this experience, in which human freedom, rising superior to nature, attains speech that God appropriates in order to show man that he is his Lord and that he acts in perfect freedom.

From these basic premises we draw three conclusions.

1. God speaks his word within man. Not only what man utters but all that he is becomes God's organ of communication. What man is and can be is only revealed in its fullness when God makes of him his alphabet, his sounding board and sense organ. God in his freedom decided to become man, chose his creature's mode of expression in order to reveal the hidden things of his divinity, and resolved to pour out the abyss of his riches into that other abyss of emptiness and indigence, in order to find his glory in the shame of the cross and in the descent to hell. Once he decided to do all this (and he did so before he made the world, the creation being the first step on the way), then from the very beginning his word regarded man's whole existence and experience as an aspect of the mode of expression. Moreover, in revelation man found God central to man. The veil of secondary causes is not torn away; on the contrary, the more God reveals himself the more deeply does he conceal himself in men. The word that in the beginning seemed to sound from heaven, somewhat apart and self-contained, now hides itself in the body of Christ, in the sacraments, in the Church's preaching, in the teaching of theologians, in the liturgical, administrative and hierarchical activities of the Church. But all this is always man's doing. He is called to encounter God and he comes to know him in living faith, through the mysterious touches

and stirrings in the depths of his soul which make him aware of God's presence and action. But we cannot come to the Father otherwise than in the humanity of his Son, and only in the mystical body of Christ have we a part in the Spirit of both. To love God we must love our neighbor, and in the humility of brotherly love we will come to know him who is eternal. Yet if man is the utterance of God he is never God himself; and to know God he must both realize and deny himself. He is what God says but never the one who says. To reveal God he must conceal, forget, extinguish himself. He will only succeed in this when he gives up all his experiences and situations, all his powers and faculties, for God to use, as the compositor uses the letters lying before him.

2. The particular word of God that we call the biblical revelation, and which is always the center of the divine utterance, passes necessarily beyond itself into a total human word, by referring back to the creation and its word and forward to the judgment on the world and the resurrection of the whole of history in God. From Christ as the center of history there falls the light that illumines its beginning and end, illumines so-called natural religion⁹ and eschatology. The religion of the patriarchs derives in part from the religion of Canaan; Abraham we see paying homage to Melchizedek, David's ancestor in Salem, later to be elevated to become the type of Christ. In the Bible we have the pre-Abrahamic saints, Abel and Enoch, brought to light by the sacred writers, together with the bright constellation Noah, Daniel and Job mentioned by Ezekiel. The later God of Israel, called Yahweh, is found under strange and perhaps confused names, those of the gods of Canaan, of the gods of mountain and storm, all those divine forces which, no doubt, originally represented the Elohim, already the God of the revelation to come. In the name and authoritative commission of the God of Israel the sacred writers make this identification, and assume the responsibility for it. Gradually the messianic vision broadens out the Jewish religion until it envisages the whole universe, the salvation of all peoples through the mediation of

⁹ Or more precisely, the religion deriving from the actual creation, from the stirrings of the grace originally given and from the workings of a secret hope, both natural and supernatural.

Israel. And correspondingly, theological reflection sets out a universal history of creation and, what is even more astonishing, anticipates the covenant with Abraham by a divine covenant with Noah, a covenant which God established expressly with the whole of mankind, with all flesh, in fact "with every living thing" and "for perpetual generations"; further, the sign of this eternal reconciliation between God and the world was one taken from nature. The priests of Israel put the question: Whence comes the marvelous stability of the cosmic order in face of the grave sinfulness of the human race? And the answer given is that the grace of God, who revealed himself to Israel, embraces the whole earth and all the generations of man along with their idols and perverted religions.

3. Since the word of God is directed to the whole of mankind as the offspring of God, nothing human is alien to it. Every human situation can be brought to bear, every kind of contact between two persons, man and wife, father and son, mother and child, king and people, priest and layman, prophet and temple, personal and ritual religion, political and religious communities, love, hatred, jealousy, mercy, fidelity, self-sacrifice to the point of the vows which bind a man forever, to the point of martyrdom whereby he renounces his own life.

And there is something else of equal moment. The word of God takes hold of the people of Israel in its historical place as bound up with a general evolution, not only in its political situation between the great powers to the east of it, not only in its cultural dependence on the Phoenicians (whose architects built the temple, whose poets influenced the form of a number of the psalms), but on the deeper level of philosophy of life, wisdom, metaphysics and religion. All these progress, especially in the ancient world, according to a kind of unitary law governing the entire development of human nature and the formation of a consciousness of mankind as a whole. We see the different human dimensions developing one after the other, and placing themselves at the free disposition of God's word. Each stage of development *can* (should God wish to make use of it) become the necessary condition for a new stage of revelation. It is due to this connection of Israel's historical process with that of mankind that, in a

certain sense, the laws of world history arrange themselves in subordination to those of the history of revelation.¹⁰

The fact is that since God wills to use human speech the revelation of the one true God waits until a kind of syncretistic monotheism has been attained by Egypt and Babylon for it to be understood at all worthily and as it should be. It presupposes the system of the Amphyctyonians (the union of the twelve tribes) already reached. The idea of a God leading the people must have gained a certain universal currency, must have been present in a general way to men's minds for it to be superseded by that of Yahweh who, when introduced in *medio deorum*, reduces every other divinity to nothing. The concept of the anointed king as a visible image of the invisible God, that of a sacred polity underlying the secular, the image of the wise man, of the prophet with his special gifts, of the mediator of salvation, of the messiah, of the seer of what transcends the visible world, a wisdom literature orientated to the end of time—all these ideas are found far beyond the boundaries of Israel. It is not just a matter of

¹⁰ Since God himself chooses, in sovereign freedom, the means and material conditions for his revelation, our theory can satisfy the most stringent requirements of the *analogia fidei*, as put forward by Karl Barth. It does so in that the same God, as Creator, prepares beforehand the elements in human history that he wills to make use of as Revealer. The space between the general history of culture and the history of revelation is subject to the law of the *analogia entis* (between creation and God), which certainly does not invalidate our first consideration.

All this has been constantly upheld in the apologetics of the Fathers, who laid down the general guidelines, and in the textbooks; for instance the treatment of Christ's sacrifice is introduced by wide-ranging reflections on the idea of sacrifice common to all peoples (ritual sacrifice, expiatory sacrifice, inner sacrifice, etc.). Now however the latest biblical discoveries permit us to discern within the Bible itself the actual historical connection of "natural religion" (with all its deformations due to sin, and so sharply censured by the word of God) and "supernatural religion". In virtue of this development we can now go beyond the abstract juxtaposition of the traditional treatises "*de religione in genere*" and "*de revelatione supernaturali*".

It is also clear that our view by no means conduces to total evolutionism or religious liberalism of any kind since it is a logical application of the law of God's incarnation in man, who has to be taken in his totality.

literary forms¹¹ that God "applies" in his revelation or adopts for his purposes. What he does is to associate himself in the most intimate fashion with each new form of human experience.

While secular history is not to be confused with sacred history, it must nevertheless be admitted that today we see what the Fathers called the *praeparatio evangelica*, the *logos spermatikos* and its development, in an entirely new, much more positive light. But the order they assumed is now inverted. It is not Plato who was dependent on Moses but Moses on "Plato", that is to say, on the Egyptian view of the world and Egyptian wisdom. This is expressly stated in scripture (Acts 7:22). In consequence, even if the general evolution of mankind is reflected in the Bible, we cannot draw from it any kind of systematic theology of world history or of the history of culture. All we can conclude is that the development of man's awareness of the unity of the human race, which we call "progress", is intimately connected with revelation.¹²

¹¹ It would be an evasion of the problem to see it solely in literary terms and to speak of literary forms as if there were only an external relationship between God's word and its human expression, and that God could have used equally well any other appropriate form. One might then say that God could just as well have been incarnated in Paul or Augustine as in Christ. It would be overlooking the essential truth that God does not take man's word out of his mouth and put it into his own, but rather makes the whole man the word of God.

¹² We can no longer speak of various independent species of progress in universal history. The more we understand the implication of human reflection—meditation on the past, prayer, suffering for and through God—in the course of the sacred history of both the Old and New Testaments, of the synagogue and the Church, the more we perceive a convergence (never an identity) of "natural" and "supernatural" progress. There are not two but three modalities of progress: that of revelation (completed with the death of the last apostle), that of the development of doctrine (or the Church's reflection on revelation), and that of secular history. The fact that a certain "supernatural progress" continues in the New Testament serves to answer a possible objection, namely that the evolution of man (assuming there is one) in the two millennia before Christ is so slight in comparison with that of the universe that its effect in sacred history can tell us nothing either about the meaning of evolution as a whole or about the relations of the forms of progress. But it must be noted that the ideas here put forward permit certain inner analogies to be drawn, analogies that can on no account be transposed into identities. On the one hand there is an

There is one more conclusion to be drawn, and we need not avoid it since it was drawn long ago by the Church Fathers. It is that the new stage of consciousness reached by Western man—the discovery of being (and so of abstract and necessary ideas, the universalism of reason) by the Greeks—seems to be one of the final “prerequisites” of man if the incarnation is to take place. Without it the necessary basis for the preaching of a gospel to the whole of mankind would be lacking, or at least not present in a way intelligible to us and appropriate to our mentality. Not only would the corresponding means of expression be lacking but even the definite human experiences and categories of thought necessary for understanding the significance of Christ as bearing upon the whole universe of being would be absent. Here too we see the synthetic action of revelation; the unity realized by Christ is prepared beforehand and, in this preparation, anticipated. If the synthesis between Judaism and Hellenism was already achieved at Christ’s coming, it was surely because the peace brought in his body between two parts of mankind (Eph 2:16) should not be estab-

inner analogy between the progress of revelation and that of doctrine, and this in two respects: (1) in both cases the obedience and religious reflection of the believer *can* impel a new intervention of the Spirit of God (as is clearly evidenced in the epoch of the wise men of Israel and in Judaism, as also in the time of the prophets); (2) in both cases however it is ultimately this Spirit of God who guides history and its developments, and this in perfect freedom. On the other hand there is an equally inner analogy (although of instrumental causality) between “supernatural” and “natural” progress since, in both cases, progress means growth in inwardness and universality, and thus the capacity to control a wider range of data. The decisive progress of the Old Testament consists in the advance from tribal to national consciousness and finally, through the exile, to a universal consciousness which gave the thinkers of Israel some intimation that the salvation of all peoples was involved in sacred history. The New Testament reflects a parallel advance of the universalistic idea in Paul’s and John’s development of the synoptics; and thus the progress of doctrine consists in a constantly deepening insight that results from an ever more comprehensive vision. Only we must not forget the operation, in all three domains, of the law by which some loss is suffered with the advance of time, a law Augustine and Gregory the Great were so conscious of. In the last analysis there are not two lines of progress because there are not two universalisms existing side by side, for the human (abstract) universal of the natural order is always subordinate to the (concrete) universal of Christ, in whom all things are brought together into unity.

lished only outside and beyond history, and because Christian faith should find already present in the world the elements conducive to an understanding of this mystery.

Human wisdom, however much God may use it in his revelation, is never dispensed from the obligation of dying unto itself. The wisdom of this world must avow itself to be foolishness in order to become the wisdom of God. Even in its literary form as given by the human writer, the word of the Bible is an integral part of the Word that judges and gives grace. The books of Job, Ecclesiastes and the Proverbs may be composed after the manner of the Egyptian and Accadish books of wisdom, but the complaints of the man in his abandonment or his resignation in face of the transience of this life take on a quite different coloring by the mere fact of being incorporated into scripture, not to speak of the inner transformation they undergo. Various stages of progress are recorded in the course of sacred history, only to be abandoned. Consider the wandering of Elijah, which took him back over the footsteps of Moses, though in the reverse direction. He left the promised land to go into the desert, and once again we see the terrifying mountain, once again the manifestation of the holy One in storm, earthquake and fire. But the times have advanced; God is no longer in these things but in the *pneuma*, in the gentle wind of the spirit.

There is a stage when the word adapts itself to the level of a culture and the stage when it transcends it. But this adaptation involves no compromise; God always reveals himself as the free, the absolute subject. Man must always make a detour to find God, make a confession, and this goes against the grain; God does not lie at the terminus of man's desires and ideals, nor is he to be reached through human asceticism and mysticism—even when carried to their highest point. All human experiences must serve God; but he is not committed to any, nor does he take over any without transforming them in his purifying flame. His word is freedom, is power. His word suffices to impel the resisting, obstinate, unfaithful Israel, in a matter of centuries, through all the humiliations, from the primitive tribal consciousness of the nomads right up to the threshold of the gospel. And how extraordinary to find the song of God's servant in the Old Testament!

All this is due solely to the power of the living Word, working like leaven from within. Into this resistant material comes the revelation, growing in depth, not only of the majesty of the transcendent God, surpassing all the immanent gods, but also of the humility, the vulnerability of the divine love, the concern of the divine heart which reveals itself in the humiliated human heart. Blessed are the poor, for God in all his riches is eternal "poverty". Blessed are the humble, for God in his majesty is the eternally "humble". God himself in his eternal ascent—*ascendit Deus*—is eternal abasement, eternal descent—*quia et descendit primum*. In Job deserted by all, in Jeremiah, in the captives of Babylon, in the poor of Yahweh crying to heaven and receiving no answer, in all these types of dereliction we see a revelation of the divine heart in its abandonment. And after the great light of the religion of the Word and of the revelation of the true God, his being and nature, it is still, once again, what man knew from the beginning, and what the Areopagite was to recall to the minds of Christians: God is the absolute mystery whom we can but adore.

God reveals himself in man in order to bring him to adore what no eye has seen. God sends his Son to express the Father in human guise. We hear the Father in his human echo; in a human obedience to death we come to experience who it is that commands it; *in the answer we have the Word*. The Son as man, at the summit of the cosmos, executes before the Father the ecclesiastic, the cosmic liturgy. In him are joined Word and liturgy.

3

Of him, of Jesus Christ, we have still to treat. In him alone but through him for all men the word of God is hypostatically one with man. In him human existence in time comes, as we saw in the first part, to a parity with the truth. Between the divine and human natures of Christ nothing is discordant; what God wills to say about himself is fully and precisely stated in this utterance, this man. *Consummatum est*. It is not beyond our reach or understanding, it has

attained its end. *Homo capax Dei*. Human speech, as we saw in the second part, contains in itself the whole of nature and the whole moral life, the entire history of man; and here its scope extends to the eternal Word of the Father, here every ideal is realized, so that anyone who builds on this ground bases his ideal on a reality. The plenitude has been reached, the end of history is present, all the temporal dimensions have been fulfilled. All this happens in a simple human life with nothing exceptional about it save an ardent love for the Father and for men, a life of work and teaching, ending in poverty and disgrace. Its glorification after death was accredited by only a few witnesses; for there was nothing here which world history could take cognizance of: only a man, the Son of Man.

Nevertheless in Jesus, a man unique and aware of his uniqueness, the Word of God reached men. God's word is no longer an abstract law, it is this man. Everything God had to say or give to the world has found a place in him. The whole objective spirit of religion, of law, of ritual is identical with the subjective spirit of this particular man, a man like us. It is the religion of freedom. When this man gives God his all, obeys him to death, he obeys but himself, his love as Son for the Father. With him it is no longer any question of heteronomy or of autonomy; the *heteros*, the Father, is also *tò autón*, the same concrete nature. He who believes in the Son is free, for he has attained to the true, absolute humanism.

The word of God that is heard in our liturgies reaches far beyond the sphere of the Church. It is the Lord of secular history, of the office and factory, of science and politics. All this it contains within itself, and this is but a small part of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden therein. The liturgy of the Church pays him homage, in knowledge and love, whereas the world does not know its Master, and seeks to crucify him anew. But the liturgy, now prostrate before him, must in the end raise itself up and seek to realize in the secular sphere what it preaches and promises in the spiritual.

REVELATION AND THE BEAUTIFUL

The "and" of the title should startle the reader, or at least give him a feeling of profound unease. It is a word that conjoins two spheres that have generally been held quite disparate, particularly by writers of a generation not far removed from our own. We recall how Kierkegaard, at an audience with the queen, was congratulated by her on his incomparable work "*Either and Or*", an incident that serves to emphasize unwittingly the sad omission of any possible conjunction between the two concepts of the title, concepts which, since Kierkegaard's eruption into the Protestant and Catholic thought of our century, have dominated Christian ideology. The first thing that a serious student of that time had to observe was the separation of the esthetic and ethical spheres, particularly where a Christian ethic or religion was concerned. Thus at a single stroke the false associations and identifications of a century and more were thrown over. But the esthetic has a strange power of attraction. When put aside it does not rest until as myth, eros, framework of thought or Hegelian kingdom of ideas it comes finally to dominate all the rest, and to incorporate Christianity as a way to itself or as an intermediary or as a last stage in the ascent. Thus, to vindicate the place Christianity claims for itself, the esthetic must be summarily dismissed (by omitting the "and"), since relegating it to a subordinate role is not sufficient.

Kierkegaard's austere position would not have met such general acceptance had it not been in conformity with a number of ideas then in the air and brought by him into the light of day. Doubtless esthetics is a young science insofar as the idea of the beautiful, previously embedded in that of the true and the good, was only liberated from the latter to any degree toward the close of the Enlightenment—though the process began with the Renaissance—and completely so in the period of German idealism. This was not just a question of method but of a whole philosophy; and in a certain respect the epoch of classicism and romanticism, of Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer was one of "es-

theticism". This aspect of the age implies no evaluation, but it does mean that the idea of the beautiful takes on a certain independence of the two cognate ideas from which it had been hitherto inseparable. It is this divorce from its background which is perilous, the beginning of an "estheticization" of the beautiful. Can the idea of the beautiful remain always the same in a period of historicism which sets itself above the form taken by beauty in the art of all peoples and times, a historicism arranging the various manifestations of art in a systematic and chronological order and so inaugurating a new way of contemplating it? And can the traditional idea of beauty subsist at all and be subsumed with the new under a common concept in an epoch of materialism and psychoanalysis, in the twentieth century when art is mainly concerned with proclaiming purely material relationships of space, surfaces and bodies and (what comes to the same thing) with representing the structural elements of the unconscious mind? The critical state we have reached may be summed up by noting that whereas previously there was a generally accepted metaphysics establishing a living bond between the immanent sciences and the transcendent Christian revelation, it has now become quite unreal and ineffectual and has been abandoned in favor of the immanence of the sciences. If this is so then Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* is not just a piece of warped and stunted Protestant Weltanschauung but also a clear expression of the contemporary situation, which (according to Hegel, but not Kierkegaard) always has reason on its side, and which the man of reason, even when he is a Christian, must take into account. Thus there came into existence a number of Catholic "Kierkegaardians", just as we now have Catholic "Picassoists". The two are closely connected. The *daimonia* esthetic which Kierkegaard propounded in his much admired but incredibly false analysis of Mozart is present also in his *Esthetic Stage*, which likewise involves an antireligious "cynicism", as well as the intrinsic necessity for the dialectical, existential form in which it is finally contained. The one thing certainly lacking in this theory of *daimonia* (as also in Goethe's "grotesque") is an understanding of what the daimon meant to Plato.

Martin Deutinger was the last of the Catholic thinkers¹ in the period 1840–60 to consider the two spheres as inseparably joined. Because of this view he was summarily assigned to the category of the romantics, whose ideology is outdated, along with the Protestant successors of the idealists who, more logical and subtle than the great masters, occupied themselves with the concordance of beauty and revelation: Christian Weisse, Immanuel Hermann von Fichte, Herman Ulrici, Conrad Hermann and the encyclopedic Moritz Carrière. For us (who do not know them any longer) they are at best communicators of the ideas of others, and it is impossible to say who among them might have continued their line of thought. At any rate it is hard to imagine how it could have influenced a theology no longer informed by a living philosophy, for in recent theology all that is presupposed and contained in philosophy is no more than an outline, a propaedeutic for the use of seminarians, not the deep reflections of the great Scholastics—and such an outline has no room for esthetics. However, rather than dwell on the justifiable complaint that recent dogmatic mores are lacking in any real feeling for beauty (all too often in their style), it is more important to concentrate on the far greater danger menacing speculative theology, namely, the kind of paralysis induced by a biblical criticism which dominates the whole field and claims to have a monopoly of scientific precision in the modern sense. It is quite impossible to see how this could have any point of contact with esthetics. Yet this is also part of the spirit of the age, and we would be guilty of ingratitude did we not acknowledge how much that was wrongfully neglected in the past is here powerfully reinstated, how much that is essential for a future theology is here made available. The spirit of our age then has its advantages, though it owes its driving force in part to a loss of the power of synthesis. Yet, after all, there cannot be any fruitful thinking in theology that does not start out

¹ There were of course subsequent attempts in the same direction, among which the curious work of G. M. Dursch deserves mention: *Der Symbolische Charakter der christlichen Religion und Kunst* (1860), also Jungmann's esthetic (first ed., 1865, second with many changes, 1884), not to mention Dyroff's esthetic which appeared in a limited edition.

from its essential center. A science is "exact" when its method exactly corresponds to its object; and one whose method of its very nature only relates to the partial aspect in current favor of the whole object can only with reserve be called exact. As regards the word of God there is no such thing as a purely human, purely historical and philological aspect in isolation from the divine and so from the dogmatic aspect. This is what is questionable about a procedure that prescind from speculation or contemplation, questionable that is from the intuitive standpoint which, in virtue of its comprehensive range, keeps the fundamental framework of the object within its vision—something impossible, in the case of a sacred object, to a detached, remote standpoint. What has happened, in modern theology, to the *frui* of the Fathers and the medievals?

How are we to recover, now, in the present day, after such a lapse of time, what has been lost? Merely refastening the thread where it broke in the time of Deutinger is out of the question. There is only one thing that might be successful: without breaking the tradition (as materialism and psychoanalysis fundamentally do) to seek out the basic elements in Kierkegaard's two spheres, the esthetic and the ethico-religious, and thereby to understand afresh how revelation and the idea of the beautiful came together originally in the Christian tradition of the West.

1. *The theological element in esthetics viewed historically*

It has always seemed the greatest paradox in the history of esthetics that the founder of the science, Plato, was a declared enemy of the "esthetic"; from the *Ion* to the *Gorgias* and the two *Hippias*, from the *Republic* to the *Laws*, he inveighed incessantly against art and artists. What was the real significance of this stance, apart from certain incidental exaggerations uttered in the heat of controversy? The mystical world, as represented for the Greeks by Homer and Hesiod in particular, when no longer taken seriously, provided no basis either for individual life or that of the state. Formerly it could have been and in fact was the only possible basis. Politics, as the creative forma-

tion of the polis, religion as the magical and mythical bond between political life and the tutelary deity of the people, art as the visible seal of this covenant between heaven and earth (the noblest example being the Egyptian bas-reliefs and paintings, where king and God stand face to face, or the divine bird inspiring the king covers his head with its wings), these three, so long as the myth was a living one, formed a perfect unity. It is possible therein to enshrine a certain tradition of "wisdom", as is proved by all the high cultures from Egypt to China, but the wisdom consists in the real, concrete sense of the integration of the three into a single whole, as against any kind of separation on abstract principles, which would be fatal.

By contrast, in Greece philosophy (together with scepticism of the indivisible myth) and the idea of the individual emerged simultaneously, but in such a way that the older mythological tradition, which offered such varied material, was put to a severe test. It was regarded by the poets as a kind of assumption, an "as if"; in the great tragedies its ambiguity could bring out the tragic alternation in human life between piety and despair. But this "esthetic" ground, according to Plato, provided no solid basis on which to build reality. Poets and painters make use of appearances but they do not attain reality.

Should the tragedians knock at the gates of the new state, saying: O strangers, may we go to your city or may we not, and shall we bring with us our poetry? How shall we rightly answer these divine men? I think our answer should be as follows: Best of strangers, we also, according to our ability, are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest; for our whole state is an imitation of the best and noblest life, which we affirm to be the very truth of tragedy. Wherefore, O ye sons and scions of the softer Muses, first of all show your songs to the magistrates, and let them compare them with our own, and only if they find that yours contain the same principles or better, will we authorize you a choir for their performance; but, in the contrary case, dear friends, it will not be possible (Plato, *Laws*, VII, 817, a-d).

The drama of reality, in which not fantasy but the requirements of being coincident with the good dictate the course of the play, must be performed. But what is the good, the divine being? Plato attempted

to answer by pursuing two lines of thought. The first, leading by degrees from the manifold of beautiful things to the idea of the good and the beautiful, he described most engagingly in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, where the inquiry was about the power and essence of eros, and where it was seen as a longing to attain the depths of the divine and absolute, made visible to the lover in the beautiful form of the beloved; a longing therefore which, without ceasing to embrace the concrete, can only love it in its relation to the infinite. The man who does not love knows nothing, but eros wills, by generating, to come to rest in the beloved. In surrender to the object as it is there is also a will to creation and formation—proceeding from love and not, as later with Aristotle, as technics and imitation (completion) of nature. It is here that Plato comes nearest to the Christian metaphysic of the Trinity, though he does not develop it, to the trinitarian *filius meus es tu*.

But the theory of ideas failed its creator in the course of his argument. All that remained was the order established eternally in the actual cosmos, the harmony between natures and essences conceived as eternal numbers, of which the earthly city was to be the authentic reproduction. In both the *Philebos* and the *Symposium* the pleasure to be found in eros is relegated to a subordinate place: "Pleasure is not the first property, nor yet the second. The first is measure and that which contains it (*metrion*) and the fitting (*kairion*). . . . The second, consequently, concerns the conformable (*symmetron*) and the beautiful and the perfect and the corresponding (*hikanon*)" (*Phileb* 66a), in such wise however that the first and the second are not opposed as the perfect idea and its inadequate reproduction in time and space, but as the measure of the real divine world and the being which contains this measure, being determined in its nature by it and expressed by it. The subhuman world has no feeling for the structure of life through the divine numbers, for "rhythm and harmony"; but "to us are given the gods as our companions and as givers of the feeling for rhythm and harmony and joy in these". The ceremoniousness pervading both public and private life testifies (as in China) to the sacred nature of the cosmos (*Laws* II, 653e-54a). We can leave undecided whether this second solution is a reversion to the order of myth, as in fact is the case

with the *Timaeus*. For us the important thing is that, in both ways, Plato can only erect his ethical doctrine on a basis of esthetics. Art driven out by the fork of philosophical seriousness returns on a plane even higher than philosophy, as the sacred art of right living in which the holiness of the divine order of the world finds its embodiment. The *kalon* and *agathon* is the vision of the holy itself (*hieron*) as "a mystery most blessed, shining in pure light" (*Phaedrus* 250), and in the second course of the argument, as the holiness of being, which is not elicited by the genius of the inspired artist or derived from him, but something originating as a gift from above and which must be handed down to the people as a living thing.

We have dwelled on this example because it is characteristic of something that constantly recurs. The great thinkers who at various times discussed the relationship between revelation and the beautiful always began by depreciating the latter, as if it had to be discarded in order to make way for the religious idea; only later, as a result of the cleavage, did the beautiful force its way back in the form of what was actually revealed. We will leave aside Plotinus, for whom the beautiful and the good merged effortlessly into a unity, and consider the case of Augustine. His conversion was in the nature of a painful turning away from sensible beauty (as well as from that of the Manichaean myth), and this privation was in some measure relieved by the teaching of Plotinus and the bittersweet substitution of a holy and spiritual beauty ("Beauty ever old and ever new, late have I loved thee"). But later Plotinus was rejected and the latent esthetic of the early philosophical writings gave way to a second, obscure phase of conversion, to the cross, laid on him as a bishop, of routine pastoral cares with nothing esthetic about them. It is not on account of his *De Musica*, with its higher Platonist occupations, that he is always regarded as the founder of Christian esthetics, but rather through the measure and rhythm of his actual experience, moving to the very edge of profligacy but always caught back into the current of a pastoral office with its humiliations. The idea of the beautiful that he established streams from all the pores of his being. It is something far more profound than his too self-conscious style (when he cultivates it) whose beauty, in fact, is greatest when its content overwhelms it.

Among all the medieval thinkers, Bonaventure applied himself most stringently to the theory of the beautiful. He might, simply as a thinker, well be counted among the Platonist school were the strongly contrasted spirit of the early Franciscans not so pronounced in his thought and, still more, in his life. Both the *fioretti* and the theology, so attractive and beguiling in their care for harmony, expression and ecstasy, have their real source in Francis, who was always a stranger to the esthetic approach. However strongly the esthetic forced itself upon him and offered a framework for his life in its tremendous impact on the times, Francis, despite his early activities as a troubadour, was essentially a very different kind of person. A later parallel is the relationship between Ignatius, a stranger in the world of art, and the impetus he gave to the baroque, an art form always conscious (at least in its best moments) that it was decorating something which no art can wholly grasp. Spanish art seems to have felt more keenly than any other that the most Christian objects art depicts are precisely the least esthetic ones: the ignominy of the passion, the repugnant facts of martyrdom. Greco's art achieves its effect by a kind of renunciation, a reversion to earlier practice, inasmuch as the beauty of the human form he portrays is only attainable through the night of faith. We are not here concerned with the question whether it is technically possible for art to depict some event in which it sees itself repudiated. We merely note the fact that it cannot rise to the level of truth without having to experience a sense of repugnance.

The case of Kierkegaard, the most arresting and significant of modern times, can be explained as a special instance of this traditional law, at any rate so long as the *Either/Or* is not considered primarily as opposing esthetics to ethics (and so to the Christian attitude) but rather as showing the impossibility of a purely esthetic attitude to life, and as proceeding in the second part to indicate directly and openly the possible synthesis. The two headings of this part reveal his intention: "The esthetic validity of marriage" and "The equilibrium between the esthetical and the ethical in the composition of personality"; and here we find to our astonishment a complete rejection of the supposed opposition between eros and agape, on the grounds that there is in eros, in first, romantic love, a religious element demanding fidelity

and constancy, and that marital fidelity finds continuous support in the purity of this original eros.

To me God has not become so supermundane that he might not concern himself about the covenant he himself has established betwixt man and woman. . . . And all the beauty inherent in the pagan erotic has validity also in Christianity, insofar as it can be combined with marriage" (*Either/Or* [Lowrie, ed.] II, 9).

Certainly, the God of the Christians is Spirit, and Christianity is spirit, and discord is posited between flesh and spirit; but "the flesh" is not sensuousness, it is selfishness, and, in this sense, even the intellectual which you call "spiritual" may be sensual; for example, if a man takes in vain his intellectual gifts, he is carnal. And I know well that, for Christians, it was not necessary that Christ should be of an earthly beauty. . . . But it by no means follows from all this that the sensuous is abolished by Christianity. First love has in it the factor of beauty, and the joy and fullness which is found in the sensuous when it is innocent can well be admitted into Christianity (42). Be amazed at the harmonious accord of these three spheres. It is the same thing, except that it is expressed esthetically, religiously and ethically (50).

The esthetic implies a provisional choice, but to cling to it would be a refusal of choice. Choosing on the other hand (which is what the ethical is) implies bringing into the inner sphere what the esthetic shows outwardly as a mood. Here Kierkegaard is at one with Blondel, who takes the "esthetic" as an attitude of life, as the rejected starting point of the philosophy which is centered on freely choosing God and thereby gaining all, even all beauty. But is this all? Or has beauty, for Kierkegaard, a lingering taste of what is for him unattainable, forbidden, since he is the one sacrificed, the one who renounces eros for the sake of God, or perhaps out of spleen or melancholy? Here the lines become entangled; and yet it is the extreme stress of his later years, in the form of martyrdom for the truth—which is, despite all, the expression of a purity—which gives even to the disorderly notes of the *Journals* the inimitable beauty of a mission fulfilled.

The last image: John of the Cross and Teresa. John, by profession a picture engraver, chooses the way of the "nothing and all", of entering

and passing through the night and nakedness of faith. Yet it is by this means that he came to be Spain's greatest poet, for it was the experience he underwent which gave him the words no imitator, whatever his genius, could have found. The slight sketch of a vision of the cross shows, as do the poems, the complete elimination of esthetic vision and artistic technique in his mysticism. The same is true of Teresa, and Lacordaire's "There are not two kinds of love" is never more applicable than here. We might argue that there is something ambiguous in Bernini's statue of Teresa but this would simply be due to our inability to grasp in its entirety the sublime, paradisaical nature of the perfectly pure eros; the Canticle of Canticles may be seen in the same light.

2. *The theological element in esthetics viewed factually*

It might be supposed from this title that the only true beauty is of a religious order and that the shock which induces us to turn aside from the seeming beauty of the world is precisely some glimpse of the only true beauty. This then is the beauty that Christian art, insofar as it is genuine, wishes to serve; this is the sun on which it attempts to gaze, and since it cannot do so directly it perseveres reverently in its effort to make this beauty visible by means of those to whom grace has accorded this vision.

One may agree with this idea of a religious esthetic, but only if it is completed by accepting all the concrete kinds of beauty immanent in the world. These are of an almost inexhaustible variety and their combinations yield ever new variations, like the notes of a great organ. Their very richness is a proof of the transcendental origin of the beautiful, but only when the impact from above is truly felt. The form of the object may convey this impact, may even contain it as a special grace. Whether in fact this is transmitted to the receiver depends on the occasion, whether he has eyes, ears or heart for it, whether his hour has come, whether he is open and receptive to the beauty in question, whether the times are propitious for the manifestation of the beauty in things (not to be exposed in museums to the gaping crowds like captured beasts).

The beauty inherent in things is susceptible of degrees from the lower to the higher, from the purely material and functional to the organic and sensible, and so from that of symmetry, proportion and harmony to that shown in vital tension and power, in the alternation of disclosure and concealment, in all the forms of interaction both inside and outside the erotic with its beguiling qualities. It includes all that in nature and in the human sphere serves to deck out the bare existence, whatever is agreeable, adornment, clothing, all the apparatus created to serve the purposes of society, its customs, distractions and prevailing modes of living. And everywhere there should be a correspondence between object and subject: the external harmony must correspond to a subjective need and both give rise to a new harmony of a higher order; subjectivity, with its feeling and imagination, must free itself in an objective work, in which it rediscovers itself, in the course of which (as in the fables of Novalis) there may be as much self-discovery as experience of another. Tension, disguise, transformation together constitute the drama, and it is not lacking in an element of cruelty, inevitably so, for man is a part of nature. Man's need and impulse to play and to shape things combine to produce the things of everyday life—a house, curtains, chairs, bed. The occasions for these are countless, and so also are the occasions for all the various forms of the beautiful which lie at his disposal. And since the beautiful comprises both tension and its release, and reconciliation of opposites by their interaction, it extends beyond its own domain and necessarily postulates its own opposite as a foil. The sublime has to be set off by the base, the noble by the comic and grotesque, even by the ugly and the horrible, so that the beautiful may have its due place in the whole, and that a heightened value may accrue from its presence.

Yet all that the history of art and culture, archeology and sociology are mainly concerned with would be inadequate were it not polarized through the experience of the whole mystery of being and the origin of things, *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*. It is this which has always been the unique real occasion of the great religious or "mythological" art of all peoples. It is from man's indigence and sense of power simultaneously, from his act of surrender and adjuration, that he comes to represent that tremendous reality which intervenes, in mas-

terful fashion, in the great moments of the life both of peoples and of individuals. "For the beautiful is nothing else than the onset of the terrible, which we only just endure, and we admire it, because it calmly disdains to destroy us" (Rilke). *This* beauty has its own proper historical moment, a time when the primitive, simple terror of the numinous begins to weaken, when the stage of philosophical speculation about "the divine", secure and disenchanting, has not yet been reached—the stage when the beautiful is domesticated and in fact attained to its highest expression (as in Periclean Athens), though it owes this ability to an earlier stage of development. Between the two periods, mythology has its greatest scope when the revelation of the divine acquires a kind of "sacramental" image which has not had time to become an esthetic object. All the important imagery of the divine was created in this period. Each people has its own primitive mythological stage, but that of Hellas spans all others in the West and initiates the themes whose variations are heard not only in the Roman and medieval periods, the humanistic and baroque, but even in certain corners of existentialism. We meet again and again with Antigone, with Prometheus; we constantly see the great artists at pains to feel in unison with this creative source. And though the later form may be remote from the original, and thus questionable, how much does it still contain if through it (as in Wagner's great work) the primitive imagery shines forth!

It is the great merit of Gerhard Nebel² to have brought out the connection between this period of art and Christian revelation—going against all the rigid traditions of Protestant theology but compelled by the facts—and to have established a real analogy between revelation and the beautiful, both the natural revelation of mythology and the supernatural revelation. The positive results in this outstanding work are all welcome, but not the extreme conclusion that all that is not part of the original event is to be considered a lapse into immanence and simply vain estheticism and antiquated museum culture. According to Nebel the event cannot extend its range, and the

² *Das Ereignis des Schönen* (Stuttgart, 1953); see also *Weltangst und Götterzorn* (1951).

analogia entis remains on the plane of the event. The immanent elements of the beautiful, on which classical esthetics dwelled by preference, are unimportant. Harmony as such, apart from any intervention from above, would be sheer boredom, play merely distraction from self, drama merely horrible, culture a cloak for unpleasant reality. Protestant thought pours scorn upon the various forms which diverge from the original experience, not satisfied until all are leveled out and exploited by positivism and psychoanalysis. If the world is sinful and under judgment then everything under the clouds, high and low, valuable or worthless, is equal. The clouds are broken only by the rays of grace from above and, strangely enough, by the beauty of myth, a beauty which is a kind of sign outside history of the grace, the latter being an historical reality; it is thus a real yet most precarious promise, open to all kinds of misuse. Is there then no Christian art? There is indeed, through the grace of the power of myth continuing to exert itself in antiquity and the Middle Ages, but when it finally ceases, Christian art, a merciful, temporary concession on the part of Christ the judge, has finally become unreal and dead.

The light of the transcendentals, unity, truth, goodness and beauty, a light at one with the light of philosophy, can only shine if it is undivided. A transcendence of beauty alone is not viable; even when it is placed in a close (dialectical) relationship with the Christian revelation it is still indebted to the modern esthetic nonmetaphysic of Schopenhauer (however paradoxical this may appear in view of Nebel's thesis). To existentialize beauty on theological grounds would be to prevent its incorporation into the structure of essences, of subjects and objects and their intertwining. We would then be deprived of the possibility of attaining, from our contact with any kind of pure essence, a flower for example, to a genuine original experience of beauty which, through its religious roots, might reach to the same depth of reality as the great mythology brought to birth at its due time in history. This brings home to us that an apparent enthusiasm for the beautiful is mere idle talk when divorced from the sense of a divine summons to change one's life. At the same time the event of the beautiful is not to be held utterly transcendent, as if it derived solely from outside and above. To ascribe such an event to "being"

while detaching it from the "coming to be" would be to annul metaphysics by the very act which seeks to establish it. Admittedly it is very difficult to retain the two dimensions simultaneously, that of the transcendent event impinging from above and that of an immanent object bound up with a certain structure. All the compromises in Catholic thought thus stop short of this parallelism. The end will be an overemphasis of the structural aspect and a neo-Thomist philosophy absorbing scripture into itself. But the difficulty must be faced: the esthetic as a certain structure and the esthetic as experience must be equally taken into account. For this proposition supplies the foundation on which to build a philosophy of the beautiful; it also points to the task before theology.

Art in the Christian era is possible as long as the sphere of mythology is still attainable, as long as there are still "gods" in this world. In early Christianity the Pantocrator, surrounded by his angels and saints, took over directly the role which in the *Timaeus* is ascribed to the higher godlike beings, a transition we can follow almost step by step from Proclus to Denis the Areopagite. The latter (together with Augustine who, like Boethius in the *Consolation*, took over the inheritance of Plotinus) was the spiritual father of Scotus Erigena; and he, the single esthetic philosopher of the early Middle Ages, had a far greater influence than is usually thought on the great medieval syntheses, right up to the Renaissance, when the kind of intimations associated with Neoplatonism were once more in vogue. In the baroque period the gods and the saints often seem to be put on an equal footing in art, and this is not, as is commonly assumed, entirely due to a dramatic convention as regards the former. Admittedly they are assigned only a derivative splendor, while on the saints fall the rays of a primordial beauty.

Yet neither Winckelmann nor Shelley, Keats, Hölderlin, nor Goethe in the second part of *Faust*, could have invoked the world of the gods so ardently if these bridges spanning the centuries had really been destroyed. But the structure they envisaged was already toppling, having been erected on a void, a void which has since been widened through the prevalence of a world view centered on man which has swept away the last traces of the gods, and through the transforma-

tion of metaphysics into technology and psychology. The moon, which for Goethe was the symbol of man's purest emotions and, in his portrayal of the classical Walpurgisnacht, the scene of the wild revelry of the love powers of the universe, is now merely a target for American and Russian missiles. This is called demythologizing but it is much more. It is in fact the elimination of the sacred and the loss of the "power of the heart" (Siewerth) to sense the "majesty of being" (Hans André) in the immediacy of God. Our concern is not to retain and transmit the old imagery of the gods but to regain the power which enabled men to embody the revelation of reality in the various myths. One must credit Christians with this power, and them alone, for the world which otherwise has no Godward tendency (since it has become mere matter, an accumulation of facts, and its synthesis is man in his state of wretchedness) has for the Christian something of eternity. In its head it has already emerged into the divine light, and the Church glorious in heaven, suffering in purgatory and struggling on earth is a single body; the individual Christian too is conscious of sharing in the continual transformation from the darkness of this world into the light of the next. What ultimately decides if the salvation proclaimed is the true one is the fact that it does not merely come down from above on a lost world, ripe for judgment, but rather acts upon it. God's grace in fact is bestowed on the world so that, filled with divine power, it may—groaningly and in pain—struggle through into the light of eternity.

The beautiful, then, will only return to us if the power of the Christian heart intervenes so strongly between the other world salvation of theology and the present world lost in positivism as to experience the cosmos as the revelation of an infinity of grace and love—not merely to believe but to experience it. That Dante, Shakespeare and Calderón could do so is clear, but what is strange is that even Eichendorff and Runge could not, in their crumbling world, speak of the miraculous Mozart who, cut off by an impenetrable wall of convention from every authentic world of myth, had the "power of the heart" to sense infallibly the true and the genuine, thereby elevating the conventional to a higher plane and imparting to the whole of created being an overtone at once Christian and cosmic.

Hopkins too in his obscure fashion effected the same dual resonance in that he linked up the *Spiritual Exercises* with the true myths of creation. Claudel's world, which he considered Catholic and often suspected of being unconsciously pagan (see *Claudel* by Robert Grosche), a world of nature and grace, heaven and earth, Bible and nature, eros and *caritas*, joy in creation and desire in abandonment, love for the finite and love for the infinite, sober pursuit of knowledge and mystical love for the mystery beyond understanding—such a world in our day can only be the product of a powerful Christian intuition springing from the heart. No one else in our age has given so complete an assent to being in its totality—and this regardless of whatever the existentialists may have to reproach him for. And with him stands Charles Péguy who, though his sweep is less comprehensive, shows even more “power of the heart” in the way he welds together the “pagan and Christian soul”. His poetry is really prayer and a monologue of the love of God the Father as he views the world he created with his dead Son in its center, covered with the soft shroud of night . . .

The revelation of beauty must not be confined to the moment when myth exercises its overwhelming power. This is not what Hölderlin means when he says: “Go down, bright sun; they noticed thee too little, they knew thee not, thou holy one.” He means the power of the heart today, the power that Hyperion³ sought in contemporary Hellas and failed to find. The universal night that begins to spread over Hölderlin's Germania is precisely that foretold in the gospel: “The love of many will grow cold.” Certainly the present time is one where love is absent, where things are deprived of the splendor reflected from eternity. Even for Christians it is extremely difficult to avoid the contagion and not to fall into a kind of eschatological spiritualism which abandons the world to the “powers”, which views all that pertains to it in a positivist and neutral light, and which betakes itself to suffering and prayer; this is the danger with Bernanos and Reinhold Schneider in their preoccupation with darkness. Yet it is just as difficult to sense in the spirit of the age what good may arise

³ In Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*—TR.

and withstand the forces of decline. Abstract art cannot be denied some power of true revelation, although art and earthly beauty cannot be completely divorced from a relationship with man and his living organic image, for he is its center as image and likeness of God. Nonetheless there is a kind of sacral abstraction, that of the Holy Spirit, something in the order of grace that corresponds to what Plato envisaged in his divine world of numbers. This is, basically, beyond both the concrete and the abstract, just as the risen Christ ceased to be concrete as regards the world of history and yet became universalized, having always the power to actualize himself in the most concrete things of history. What is difficult for us need not be impossible; its very difficulty in fact is a call to execute our task with Christian generosity.

Created being would not be an image and "outflow" (Thomas) of the sovereign and living God if its transcendentals were static properties, clear and evident to our view, or if, despite their immanence in all contingent beings, they did not have something of the freedom and mysterious depths of God's decision to reveal himself. And since for God creation was to be the first stage of his self-giving to the creature, the latter as such retains something of the unfinished character of that early stage, though this does not (as Protestant theology maintains) imply, in its contrast with the final completed stage, a general category of revelation, into which the revelation by Word falls as a special case. For the transcendentals are not categories of being. The unfinished character of created truth, beauty and goodness is not related to the historical revelation as abstract to concrete, even if the formal quality of openness to God, as opposed to the fulfillment of this openness of God's free intervention, is easily confused with abstractness. But this openness, which belongs to the sphere of created beings, insofar as it is always something other than the *ens commune* (the sum of realized things which, as such, are subject to investigation by the understanding) and other than the potentialities hidden in these real essences and thus inexhaustible, is *ens transcendens* (there is no other—the creation is not a "portion" of being but a participation); and this sphere of openness contains, hidden and unfinished, the goods of salvation: peace in God, beatitude and transfiguration, victory over

sin, paradise present though concealed, all that the beautiful consoles us with—and without giving us more than a foretaste, an indication of the “wholly other” fulfillment, not far off but already present: there is one among you whom you know not! This openness really belongs to the world as such and must not be considered supernaturalized; it is the dwelling place of the “gods”, the home of genius and of the true experience of those who genuinely encounter them.

3. *The esthetic element in revelation*

We now have to treat of certain matters that imply an opposite conclusion to the one already suggested. We spoke of the “shock” and repulsion that alone carry man over from the esthetic to the Christian sphere. In Israel everything “mystical” was uprooted and discarded to make room for the living God. There was never any transfiguration; the order of grace was perceptible only in the absolute sobriety of the mind. “The world of the New Testament,” says Nebel, “is completely lacking in the beautiful”, and to support this thesis he goes on to say: “David and Solomon were great kings, but art always seeks the proximity of the great powers of history. The Galileans, among whom the divine Word was made flesh, were provincial, without culture. . . . It is unthinkable that anything beautiful could arise here.”

It is true of course that the event with which the scriptural revelation pierces into history impinges so sharply as to come first only as a shock, and that only after it has been received, obeyed and acted upon does it reveal its full breadth and depth. The word is sweet in the mouth but bitter when swallowed. This fact however is acknowledged by Christian contemplation and theology, to which the Holy Spirit discloses the power of the divine unity, truth, goodness and beauty, a power secretly present in the event and bursting out into the infinite. Yet it must not be forgotten that the joy of contemplation, surpassing all earthly joys—the *frui* of passive reception to which Mary of Bethany abandoned herself and which the Fathers and medieval writers deemed a foretaste of heaven—is not, despite what Christ said about the “one thing necessary”, the direct object of the

incarnation. Rather its end is the perfect following of Christ, the faith and loyalty which lead to the cross (counter to human will) and so something which goes beyond contemplation, so gratifying is it. Consequently when contemplation is part of this following, as with the Carmelites, and not simply a consolation and help toward it, it is largely deprived of its savor and becomes an element in the economy of the redemption, an act performed for the Church and the world. The cross is the first aim of the incarnation, indispensable as long as the world continues, and whatever share is given in the joy of the resurrection it cannot replace the duty of finding redemption through the cross and of sharing deeply in the passion itself. For this reason, the glory inherent in God's revelation, its fulfillment beyond measure of all possible esthetic ideas, must perforce remain hidden from the eyes of all, both believers and unbelievers, though in very various degrees.

When Paul speaks of Christ's emptying himself, of hiding his glory and becoming poor, and of how his disciples must forego honor and choose opprobrium, become fools for Christ's sake, weak, despised, exiles, and when John promises them the world's hate, they are only expressing how the glory belonging to Christ is done away with; their words do not mean the elimination of the transcendentals of this world, truth, goodness and beauty, in favor of their contraries. Almost the only occasion on which scripture uses esthetic terms is when speaking of the mystery of the suffering servant, and then but to deny their application: "There is in him no *eidōs* and no *doxa*; we knew him, but he had neither *eidōs* nor *kallōs*"; but this mystery is not something ugly, any more than the veiling of his truth is untruth. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:25). Thus, insofar as the veil over the face of Christ's mystery is drawn aside, and insofar as the economy of grace allows, Christian contemplation can marvel, in the self-emptying of divine love, at the exceeding wisdom, truth and beauty inherent there. But it is only in this self-emptying that they can be contemplated, for it is the source whence the glory contemplated by the angels and the saints radiates into eternal life. There are "things on which the angels delight to gaze" (see 1 Pet 1:12), and which "the

manifold wisdom of God makes known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places through the Church" (Eph 3:10). And if on the first Sabbath God is said to have stood back from his work and contemplated its utter rightness and goodness, so likewise the great Sabbath at the end of time, to which everything strives (Heb 4:1-10), will be a participation in the divine contemplation of his works (not only of God but, with God, of what God has done).

The history of revelation then is inevitably interspersed with points of rest which like the Sabbath should grant us a true vision of the course of divine revelation. If there were no such contemplation, God's revelation would not in fact be worthy of man. Contemplation of the mystery of the cross does not do away with the revelation of being (and so of the esthetic factor), nor does it replace the latter, for then God would be canceling his own plan for the world, together with the conditions he laid down for its fulfillment. On the contrary, the paradoxical events with which God "shocks" sinful man are seen as an invitation and stimulus to overleap the bounds of a closed world of finite ideas and to share in God's self-manifestation and openness, something to which the creaturely condition itself points, though unable to attain it. It was the usual tendency of psychology and sociology to usurp the place of philosophy, a tendency which led Nietzsche to regard the paradoxes of the New Testament as substituting a proletarian religion for a religion of nobility and explaining it as an outcome of resentment. But it only needs an unprejudiced view of the facts to realize that the humiliation of the servant only makes the concealed glory shine more resplendently, and the descent into the ordinary and commonplace brings out the uniqueness of him who so abased himself.

The beauty of this event cannot be contemplated from a point outside revelation or alien to it since, as we have seen, revelation itself is interpenetrated with this kind of contemplative vision, between which and the event no hard and fast line can be drawn. Thus in the Old Testament each new stage presupposes an understanding and contemplative view of the preceding. What has been done takes in the psalms the form of prayer; in the sapiential books they are the object of a contemplation which recapitulates the history while applying

and interpreting it. Again, the life of Christ is a recapitulation on the absolute plane of the entire old covenant, and from the high point of the cross and resurrection the whole meaning of his life is expounded before the Church for her to keep in memory:

"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled that are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me." Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the scriptures. And he said to them: "Thus it is written, and thus the Christ should suffer, and should rise again from the dead the third day" (Lk 24:44-46).

Within this setting of a general worldview come all the various and very personal ways of contemplation: that of Paul who from his own personal experience of grace explains its reversal of a given situation; that of John, the son of thunder, who without violating the Old Testament scheme of judgment clarifies it by means of the dialectic of love; the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who, raising the Old Testament "wisdom" to a higher plane, adopts the Platonist scheme of shadow and archetype (the basic idea of all esthetic theory) in order to explain the economy of the two Testaments; finally the Apocalypse, which transposes the whole concatenation of events of historical revelation onto the plane of vision (imagination working the transformation) and, with the intimation of a fullness of meaning not to be mastered on earth, flies with the "eternal gospel through the midst of heaven" (Apoc 14:6).

Thus revelation itself is the foundation of a dialectic, of ever-increasing range and intensity, between event and vision, in which the element of the tremendous, inherent in the event itself, nevertheless overwhelms the person contemplating it and then to such a degree that he is left with no alternative except a return to simple discipleship, and this in turn brings a new sense of being overwhelmed, but at a deeper level. This dialectic needs a real structure if it is to be conformable to man and the world. Only such a structure brings out clearly the background of infinite mystery that seeks to reveal itself as the beautiful, true and good. In its absence, faith would not be

conformable to human nature; it would be spiritualistic and irrational. The historical revelation is molded throughout into a single structure, so that the person contemplating it perceives, through the relationships and proportion of its various parts, the divine rightness of the whole. For however clear and convincing these relationships are, they are inexhaustible—not only in the practical sense, because we lack the power to grasp them in their entirety, but also in principle, because what comes to light in the structure is something which opens our minds to the infinite.

Contemplation of the historical revelation through the word of scripture, then, is anything but a "science" on the level of other human "exact" sciences, or even on the level of exegesis, if this means simply the application of the general laws of philology to the special case of the Bible. Of course it requires this "exact" method also, provided this latter remembers that "exactness" in a method means the suitability of the method for its object, and that in this case the human, earthly aspect of the object cannot, even in the smallest matter, be isolated and treated on its own and then later be incorporated into the theological vein. The decision for faith cuts right into philology and makes us see in the text a variety of meanings on different levels. The Holy Spirit of the Father has "hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them to little ones"; and it would be a reversion to the error of the scribes to assert that he only discloses the meaning of scripture to the believer by using the findings of modern exegesis, and that any mode of contemplation which receives the divine word without the aid of scientific method cannot bring an adequate understanding of it, however much "pious edification" it achieves. It would be truer to say that philology works for the benefit of the contemplation of the Church as a whole, in which the individual directly participates and so in some measure shares in the outcome of its investigations. The Holy Spirit, however, imparts what is perhaps best designated as a supernatural esthetic sense. This surveys the whole complex of relationships as intended by God; and these have their own power of conviction, by which the revelation of divine things is seen as proving itself.

The center of the whole structure of revelation is the persisting but

ever-changing relationship between promise and fulfillment, like a diptych displaying on left and right an interaction of features, the one explaining the other and showing its rightness. This applies in the first place to the orders of creation and of grace in general. Within the order of grace it proceeds to the basic relationship of the Old and New Testaments, a relationship which in turn passes over into the relationship of the two aeons, that of the world which passes and that of its enduring form with God. Each of these diptychs seems, taken by itself, to be fully comprehensible, but the way one merges into another contradicts this appearance and opens up a perspective onto the infinite, where all the results achieved in an earthly sense are canceled, though this does not mean that the individual elements are destroyed or their prophetic meaning disavowed.

Christ, God's greatest work of art, is in the unity of God and man the expression both of God's absolute divinity and sovereignty and of the perfect creature. He is moreover the expression of the Son of Man's humiliation to the status of slave of the Lord and, by this very fact of his elevation as God's Son, to the status of co-ruler with the Father. In this divine and human double unity God reveals himself as the eternal two-and-one, Father and Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Thus the christological structure becomes the manifestation of the Trinity; in this one human voice also sounds the voice of the Father. Whoever has the power to receive in faith this voice with its twofold resonance thereby possesses the interior proof of its rightness (Jn 8:16-17). This would be a "perception of form" on the highest plane, but because of man's weakness and the difficulty in making the creation, involved as it is in Christ's humanity, participate in this supreme relationship, the vertical dimension is presented horizontally, as extended in time. The Son's utterance is now understood as a lifelong obedience to the Father's law promulgated on Sinai and to the prophecies made about him. The whole history recorded in the Old Testament issues in this simple obedience of his which, in thus fulfilling it, makes clear at last how the whole complex network is designed for a definite end; it is like the intricate anatomy of the eye or the ear, one which becomes intelligible when we know what simple seeing or hearing means.

One can never manage, by infinitesimal approximation, to smooth out the transition from matter to the act of the senses; there is always a leap, though effected in innumerable stages. In the same way the leap from the Old to the New Testament is effected by almost infinitesimal degrees (as the present Qumran problems have made us acutely aware) without making Christ's personality, sovereign and free, in the least dependent on any preceding stage. The vertical aspect, that in a man's voice the very voice of God is to be heard, that God speaks along with him, is the culmination of all religion; the horizontal aspect, that fulfillment corresponds to promise, is the culmination of all art. But the extravagance of the fulfillment, the "shock" of the Word becoming flesh—an event so revolutionary that it surpasses all possible anticipation—this very extravagance constitutes together with the promise a single *form*. For this reason the unity of the divine and human must also be considered as form, in fact the form of all forms.⁴ The diptych pattern persists throughout, corresponding to the duality given in the creation and governing it (Sir 33:7-15) in all the changes history brings as it unfolds its true meaning, for the duality does not imply a static condition. In Christ all that is implied in creation is brought to fulfillment, and so he is one with the Church as his creation, bride and body; in this two-in-one the meaning of the world is made finally manifest under the grace of the Father as the eternal marriage of the Lamb.

Thus the Church is situated between the Old Testament and Christ's second coming, between the passing and the coming aeon, between earth (the creation) and heaven (the place of God). She is a diptych in the most comprehensive sense. But who or what is the Church? What sort of interrelationship, what sort of encounter of human and divine sociology, where one and the same individual alternates between being member of the body and spouse of Christ, between his standing apart as a person and his absorption in a common identity? And, resulting from this, what is the mystery of the Christian life with the tension it involves between the claims of the person and those of the

⁴ The problem raised by the absence of proportion between God and creature (*finiti ad infinitum nulla est proportio*) and its bearing on Christ is a basic one in Nicholas of Cusa's theology.

mission confided to him, a duality deriving from and analogous with the double nature in Christ: "As the father has sent me so also I send you"? It is a life more full of meaning than any other, one which, in disregarding self in the mission (to the point of martyrdom), losing itself in fact, "gains souls"; a life whose mission demands pliability to Christ and his Spirit, formed by submissiveness to events, and in this *passio*, this $\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\ \pi\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$, attains its highest activity and fruitfulness. This life comprises three facets, for it implies a vision of what is meant by the Christian life, a plunge into this life (the experience of it being quite other than was intended), and its insertion into the framework of the Church, for the member must follow a law governing the whole body, a law to which it is superior but which enables it to share in the vitality of the whole.

All this, and much else of the same genre, seems at first sight vague and exaggerated, wild and impossible to substantiate, impossible both in theory and practice. It is only in the interior domain of faith, in living experience of the mystery with all its elements, that its rightness is self-evident. Just as when the specific tone values of a picture reveal themselves to the gaze of the expert in their esthetic "logic", though the layman can only see a hodge-podge of lines and blotches. The rapture of this kind of experience in faith is quite different from what is called estheticism, something quite incompatible with the seriousness of the Christian life. Nor is it an anticipation of a state only to be attained in eternity, for the rapturous element of the experience is not a fixed pole, but something ever in motion, something always involved in the interplay of the transcendentals. In the Christian scheme the joy and rapture experienced by the individual must ever and again be made subservient to the law of suffering on behalf of the community, and consequently the vision accorded to him must constantly submit to being obscured by the ordinary activities of life. In these the good to be done here and now, the sober truth, counteracts all that beguiles and enchants, and the intoxicating variety of perspectives are gathered up into the one thing necessary, whose simplicity comprises everything, and in which without comprehending it we feel ourselves incorporated and enfolded, "careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of

your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph 4:3-6). All of a sudden only one thing is essential: love. But from its monism everything constantly comes forth new. The simple richness of the one Being opens out and discloses all the fullness of its truth, trinitarian, christological, ecclesiological, sacramental and cosmological.

4. *The esthetic element in theology*

We have already treated of this element by implication. Contemplation exercised on the rich fabric of revelation and its witness, holy scripture, is itself a beginning of theology and impels us to proceed further. We take this word "theology" in its widest sense, as the understanding of the truth delivered for our belief, and this presupposes the application of reason and a striving to live by it.

The reason of one who lives in and with the Church opens itself out to the greatness of the truth, both to the profundity of its mode of revelation and to the clarity of its form. Such a mind is never seduced by the mirage of an infinity devoid of content or by Gnostic subtleties. God's revelation in Christ can have no further relationship with an abstract divine absolute, not even as a matter of speculation or hypothesis, since God has freely decided, from and for eternity, not to be without a world. In it he wills to be glorified and, in order to fill it with his glory, he descended into the abyss of creaturely helplessness, down to the cross and to hades. Consequently we can encounter the deep mystery of God nowhere else but in the context of the world it informs. It is difficult to speak in appropriate terms of the concealment of all form (*eidos*) and of all rationality in the cross and hades, for the Redeemer took upon himself the formlessness of the world's sin so that he might bear it alone and impart to us in its place his own form, christological and ecclesial; and yet this gift must contain (without impairing this form) something of the formlessness of the cross, though as a mystery of the transformation wrought in grace and mercy—it is formlessness created and maintained by the form.

Catholic theology has always been conscious of being subject to

the exigencies of the form of Christ. It has always been, at its height, a spiritual activity, aware not only of a rational and ethical but of an esthetic responsibility to the relative proportions of the various parts of revelation. How clearly we see this in the letter of Pope Clement, in its nobility and beauty a prototype of every subsequent encyclical; there we see due measure and love in a unity reflecting the mind of the divine Shepherd himself. Justin and Eusebius saw the inner relation between the initial and the perfected stages of revelation in that between creation and history. Irenaeus constructed his theology on the basis of the antiheretical diptych of the Old and New Testaments and so arrived at the ecclesiastical aspect which dominated his entire thought. And so it continues. It is easy to see how the inner form of the Bible, transmitted through the form of the Church, puts its imprint on all these systems of theology, however original and personal they may be. Perhaps we should even speak of its Hellenistic imprint, with its proclivity for the beauty of myth, its mundane flavor, its domestication of the mystery of sin and redemption. Once again let us hear what Protestantism has to say:

Anyone who is concerned with the world in all its range, with forms and proportions, with man's heroism, with morality, with the splendor of forms, with the exploration of the sphere of myth, will feel repelled by Protestantism. Luther destroyed the rich treasury of myth, and replaced it with an arid, official Institute. Anyone enamored of beauty will shiver in the barn of the Reformation, just as Winckelmann did, and feel the pull of Rome.⁵

The warning given here must be attended to. But the contrast drawn leaves out the factor of contemplation and also its basis, the proportion inherent in revelation itself, which refuses to let the event, by its own impact, dominate and exclude all the rest, but joins event and form together, indissolubly. This, we feel, is what is lacking in Luther.

Catholic theology must not of course be sought exclusively in the beautifully elaborated systems of Augustine, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. No less important is the theologically formed existence of all those disciples and confessors whose concern was never to set

⁵ See Nebel, *op. cit.*, 188.

themselves up as Christian personalities but rather solely to follow the Christian life in forgetfulness of self. The concept of a "theological existence" has a scriptural basis for, in both the Old and New Testaments, those entrusted with certain tasks sacrificed their own private existences in order to be the bearers of revelation. The last part of the gospel of John for example can only be understood if we take Peter and John both as persons and as office holders, that is, as "real symbols" of the Church in her authority and her love; and a similar consideration applies to the other two "pillars of the Church", James and Paul. In their sharply contrasting roles they were not engaged in personal conflict, but embodied the dialectic of one function with another. For the unity of the Church is a supernatural one and not definable in earthly terms; and it can only be realized in a surrender, ventured in faith, to the office actually committed to her, or rather in the still higher venture wherein different offices alternately come together and contrast in a common surrender to the Church which comprises all. The basic experience recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is continued at various levels throughout the history of the Church. The latter is not a continuance of revelation (which finished with the apostles), nor is it a kind of secular history of no concern to revelation (a history of Christian communities and individuals). It consists essentially in a continuous embodiment of the Son's life, through the Holy Spirit, in innumerable forms of participation. These are variations on the theme, bringing to light all its latent possibilities, showing how all life and history is penetrated and informed by the original form of Christ.

What is distinctively Catholic is that this informed existence is posited within the objective, prescribed and, for the individual subject, normative form of the Church. The hierarchical office is a form, the sacramental system is a form; and obedience to the Church according to her mind is how the individual appropriates the form. Whatever heights he may be called to in his choices and decisions, his life is, from the outset, made significant by reason of an attitude informing everything, an attitude which ultimately derives from the attitude of the Church as bride of Christ, and of her archetype, the "handmaid of the Lord". Even the believer finds it astonishing that the real life

of faith continues to be lived, upheld by the grace of God. It is, at its highest, the mystery of the cross, of the mystical night of faith which, with all its terrors and feelings of abandonment, cannot shake for a moment the loyalty of the lover. He remains enclosed and protected within an unbreakable, crystalline form.

The content of this form is the Father's gift to us of agape flowing out in the nuptial love between Christ and the Church, a love which can certainly be called eros in its highest and most original sense. The Canticle of Canticles, in its clear erotic import, is prophetic of this its fulfillment, whether it be taken or not as applicable, in the meantime, to the nuptial love between Yahweh and his people. And in any case its literal sense is not to be given so sacred a significance as to make it, from the very beginning, a "play of mysteries", thereby depriving the words of their plain meaning. For it is not mainly a question of particular concrete statements open to allegorical interpretation but of the creation of a highly charged erotic atmosphere, which alone gives force to the words and acts of the king, of the Shulammite and the incidental characters. The whole setting is redolent of the harem of an oriental potentate, but the Shulammite, as is frequently insisted, is unique among the thousand chosen, the spotless one; what takes place is presented as in singular contrast with the pervading atmosphere. It was written after the religion of Yahweh had begun to establish itself and to uproot all the other religions with their erotic and orgiastic practices; it was also about the time of Solomon's downfall into the idolatry of the Canaanites under the impulse of eros.

Accordingly this canticle, thus interpreted, served an indispensable purpose, since human eros (gathering up and sublimating all the eros in nature) is an ingredient of human love, even though the latter has long ceased to have the beguiling atmosphere of eros as its form and prerequisite. Eros, being a mode of love that foreshadows and promises the fulfillment of all earthly love, is not to be discarded as valueless; and since we are concerned with the incarnation and with a nuptial relationship in one flesh in the eucharist, the passion and the resurrection, there can be no question of asserting that eros, transformed, may not pass over the threshold of the New Testament. The atmosphere of the gospel is admittedly one of sober dedication to the

"work" at hand, but with constant reference to the festival day with the Bridegroom already present; the frequent feastings, no mere allegorical formalities, are *the* sign of the Son of Man (Mt 11:19). There is nothing Dionysiac here, for it is the beginning of the New Testament; yet the warmth of God's Heart has been reproduced in the warmth of a human heart. Earthly eros as an "atmosphere" blooms but briefly, and every man has the duty to compensate its withering by the force of his love, to endue it, transformed, with renewed vitality through the moral power of the heart. But the mysterious bond between Christ and the Church has something of eternal youth; the nuptial state is timeless, as that of the Canticle, where the I-thou relationship does not envisage a later stage (children and household concerns). Here indeed eros, raised above the various ends it serves in organic nature, unconcerned with birth, death and worldly strivings, is set directly on the line leading from the first beginnings of paradise to the marriage feast at the end of time. The Canticle is a poetical representation and thus a promise of a reality that is made present in Christ and the Church, raised above all conflicting purposes and all transience.

Certainly we are taught both by scripture and the great classical theology to speak of this reality with reserve; yet, as this same theology also shows, we should apply to it all the powers of the heart. For in its greatest period, theology cannot be considered apart from the innumerable commentaries on the Canticle, as embodying the central mystery of all theology. The same impulse is given by the great mystical tradition, which cannot be discarded merely because of a few ambivalent, incidental phenomena or because of ecstasies like Teresa, or as an insignificant element of the Church's life that is better avoided. Consider only the series of great commentators on Denis the Areopagite, whose writings on the mystery of the divine eros are so liturgical in tone and breathe a spirit of awe and reverence. How barren seems the modern, academic approach, which has served to unmask falsifications, in comparison with the *sensus catholicus* of the great visionaries and theologians, so conscious of the continuity between Paul and the Areopagite, between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the two "hierarchies"! The loss of the erotic element of the

Canticle and of the esthetic element of the Dionysian writings has resulted in a dessication of theology. What it needs is to be steeped anew in the very heart of the love mystery of scripture, and to be remolded by the force it exerts.⁶

The spirituality of the Christian artists and esthetic philosophers of the last century (from 1860 to the present) is strongly brought out by their preserving a sense of the unity of beauty and religion, art and religion, when they had hardly any support from theology, and notwithstanding the breakdown of the old tradition and the prevalence of materialistic and psychological views incompatible with theirs. In this they were in accord with the original tradition of the West, as well as with the sentiment of the learned in various countries. For behind them lay, despite the solvent effect of Kierkegaard, the religious force of German idealism, of Goethe, Schelling and Novalis, and this exerted its influence on the England of Coleridge, Newman, Thompson and Hopkins, which in turn was connected by hidden but strong ties with the France of Péguy (as Alexander Dru has shown in his excellent study of the latter). Péguy's religious and poetic insight, in his *Clio*, *Eve*, *Mystères* and *Note Conjointe*, surpasses in profundity the tremendous synthesis of Claudel's *Ars Poetica Mundi*, which itself links up Aeschylus and the Psalms with Thomas Aquinas and his own very dramatic and individual interpretation of created being. Claudel the artist did not shrink from helping to fill up certain gaps in modern exegesis by making his own commentary on the Canticle. Maritain and Gilson have both placed the esthetic of the great Scholastics in the setting of present-day problems, and the extraordinary range of writers dealt with in the work of Edgar de Bruynes (*Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*, three vols.) makes it impossible to ignore such a wealth of speculation. Manzoni in Italy, Soloviev in Russia, Lotze in Germany, the schools of Christian theists, Haecker in his later work, Adolf Dyroff, Rilke too in his conception of inspiration, all maintain the same general outlook. The fact that so many creative artists (almost all composers and many painters) turn back in their maturity to the

⁶ "No divine quality has, perhaps, been so neglected" as beauty. See Pohle-Gierens, *Dogmatik* I, 9, 213-14.

profundities of revelation is significant of the coming of an attitude totally different from that which previously prevailed.

Beauty is not subject to man's command, and nothing is freer, less subject to hard and fast rules than the balance between the favorable historical circumstances in which great art appears and the freedom of divine grace. The latter is not there for the purpose of compensating the lack of the former. Nonetheless the prayer of the artist for the right spirit and the right kind of inspiration has always been effective. No matter how great the genius, he can no longer, now that the mystery of Christ has come to dwell with us, penetrate to the heart of beauty without the aid of the Holy Spirit. If both cannot be conjoined perfectly—the gospel is no human work of art—it is always the function of a given epoch to make itself receptive to the art of the Holy Spirit, to let the power of love mold it, for it is the absence of this that explains the coldness of our own art; that fire alone can rekindle it. Only one whose heart is attuned to the art of God can be expected to establish order and due proportion in the confusion and chaos of the present.

THE WORD AND SILENCE

Verbo crescente verba deficiunt

In all religions men come to be sated with words and attracted to the charm of silence. Words form part of the clamor of the world; they are essentially delimiting, denominating, defining, determining. They express the law of essences and become themselves a law, a positive ordinance. Whether they set out to encompass truth in its finite form or, as the true way of the law, *dhammapada*, to point toward truth, the sharp edges of the finite hurt the finite creature, who hankers after perfect liberation from restriction, after the nameless. "The name is sound and smoke, overclouding heaven's brightness." For surely in every finite manifestation is shown forth the one that is not to be counted as one among the many. The being in which all is immersed is truly no abstraction; it is act and reality, and every individual thing speaks of it, without its content being exhausted. The "nothing of all that" is what the finite hungers and thirsts for, and the name we attach to it is of no consequence; its blessedness consists in being unnameable. In Asia more than elsewhere men have turned their face toward this *mysterium fascinosum*, and as we have said it matters little whether the way leading to it is conceived as a "revealed religion" in which a ray from beyond pierces through to enlighten and guide the votary in his attainment of a mystical nirvana, or the way is followed out as an ascetical technique of liberation from all the finite and of stripping away all the coverings of being. The aim in both cases is the same. For even the revelation of a God who redeems can, from the standpoint of this purpose, be held as no more than subsidiary and transient, one avatar among others. But the religious yearnings of Asia are the root whence spring the great European religions and worldviews. The Enlightenment itself, Hamann, Herder and the romantics not only sensed but actually knew how indebted Greece was to the East, knew the unity of the whole eastern Mediterranean. The spiritual formation of the West was due to a Syrian (Denis the Areopagite), an Egyptian (Plotinus), an African (Augustine); and we know how the sense of

longing it caught from the East constantly spurred the West to new crusading zeal, both in the physical and spiritual spheres.

In fact man's last word is one of repudiating his own words. Virgil in his will left instructions to burn his *Aeneid*. Thomas ceased to write some time before his death; all that he had written seemed so much straw. At the age of forty-three, Gogol threw the second and third volumes of *Dead Souls* into the fire, and died a few days later. How many fires must have blazed like that on the eve of death, destroying what the author, freed at last, willed "to know no longer according to the flesh", all part of the holocaust wherein he achieved his own transformation? What can escape being destroyed along with all the rest? Nothing—except, for a Christian, the word of God as set down by him. *Verba mea non transibunt*, not even in the final conflagration of heaven and earth. The earth sinks, the heavens dissolve, the sea turns to vapor, but the eagle flies through the midst of heaven, in his beak the scroll of the *evangelium eternum*.

There comes a time for the Christian when he wearies of all that is positive and concrete. He finds himself enchained by words and facts, without hope of liberation. In all other religions the finite is seen sooner or later to point beyond itself, to be an intermediary. Even for the poet who loved the finite world so much there came a time when he sang the praises of the living things that aspired to death by fire, when he himself wished for the moment when, in the first glimpse of eternal life, we lose sight of ourselves. For the Christian, however, the positive and concrete persist to the end, and isolate him from the rest of mankind. This is true both of Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic appears more confined by the sacraments in their character of a definite event (a character diminished in Protestantism, which tends to regard them as mere memorials of a single, eternal event), by the positive character of the hierarchical institution, dogmatic formularies, laws and prescriptions, from which he can never be liberated all his life, and which give his life (viewed from the standpoint of what is highest in religion) the character of a penitential progress. The Protestant is confined more stringently by the positive character of the word of scripture, which he wills to be all sufficient,

without any mysticism to soften its rigidity, without any contemplation to transfigure its sense, without the principle of tradition to make it more attractive. As his own judge of the Bible, he files away at the chain he himself has forged, torn in opposite directions by faith and reason, by the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history.

Neither Catholicism nor Protestantism can ever make its message more attractive to mankind by freeing it from the positivity of the word in its historical factual character, whether by transforming it in a moral, ascetical sense or in a mystical and contemplative sense. Missionaries of other religions have their books which they propagate and expound, and it is a source of humiliation for the Christian missionary not only that he has to begin with a book but that he must always continue with it; he can never lay it aside as finished with. "God's word says this, forbids that—see Luke, chapter and verse so-and-so." Indeed it is perfectly true that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob proclaims himself as the true God, present to the world, no otherwise than with these positive, historical credentials and under this name. He is the God whose will it was to rouse the attention of his people of old with repeated new, unexpected positive revelations and instructions, and who has fettered his new people with the positive revelation of his Son, never to be superseded: "Hear him"; while the Son for his part has fettered his followers with the positivity of the Church: "He that hears you hears me". How can a religion so enchained to what is positive and concrete hope to still the yearning of men's hearts for what is without name? The voice of one sated with words is heard even in the Bible: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is an affliction of the flesh" (Eccl 12:12).

Truly "the letter kills". Has Christ then, and what he brought into the world and inaugurated, killed the letter? What did Paul mean by saying: "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know him so no longer" (2 Cor 5:16)? Can there be for the Christian a stage beyond history and the word as set down? Is not all that is positive made merely provisional through the doctrine of the resurrection, by which the flesh is not destroyed but "transfigured", and which replaces the desire for absorption in God by the desire that

the temporal be made eternal? "For we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon"; "Yet so that we be found clothed, not naked"; "For we know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, we have a building of God, . . ." (2 Cor 5: 1-4). Yet it is still a question of a building, a heavenly Jerusalem, whose walls have been measured, though by angels, with streets, real streets, though of gold and transparent like glass. And if its temple is now God, the almighty Lord, it is also the lamb; and if the Lord remains invisible on his throne the lamb itself is visible. And how many transcendent events are depicted in the Apocalypse!

"But the Spirit quickeneth", the Spirit, that is, of God who makes use of the syllables of a divine revelation in a way analogous to the use made by the poet of a language already in existence to express in his own way what is beyond speech, analogous also to the mystic's constant attempt in words to convey what he has learned in silence. "But the Lord is Spirit", even insofar as he is the Word of God. For granted that he was the Word of the "nonword" and that his word was to be understood, would it not need to be understood, necessarily, as the word of the "nonword"? Would not the language of the "positivity" of the Christian revelation (which is not the same as that of created nature in general) have to be taken as the expression of something which is itself neither "speech" nor "expression", and what may very well be the *truth* of what all human religion strives after, though it exceeds man's grasp?

I

Immediately after the apostolic period, beginning with Ignatius of Antioch, silence is seen as superior to the word. The expressions he uses are so pointed and definite that they have never been superseded, indeed hardly equalled by any Christian writer.

It is better to be silent and to be than to speak and not to be. To teach is good, if one does what one says. There is one teacher, who spoke and it was done; and what he did in silence ranks on a level

with the Father. Whoever really possesses the word of Jesus can sense also his silence, how he is perfect, how he works through his word, and is known through his silence (*Eph* 15:1-2).

The word of Jesus sounds from a place of silence for it to be a word at all. That place is, firstly, the silence of the Father, "who has revealed himself through his Son, Jesus Christ, who is his Word come forth from silence" (*Mag* 8:2). But for this very reason it is also Christ's own silence, which can be perceived by the man who has received his word. He is perfect in that, like Christ himself, he acts by speaking but is known in his silence, in the greater sphere of mystery; it is there that the Word must be, pervading it in order to be the Word of God. This sphere is filled with the silent "doing" and "being" of the Word—ultimately his silent suffering. For Ignatius this is the visage presented by the Church: "The more I see a bishop keeping silent the greater should be the reverence I have for him" (*Eph* 6:1). "With this bishop I have come to learn that he obtained the services of the community not by his own efforts or through men. . . . I am astounded at his mildness, which can do more by silence than idle words can" (*Philad* 1:1). Interior silence carries the word that sounds, justifies it and gives it efficacy. "The tree is known by its fruit, and those who confess themselves disciples of Christ are visible by their deeds" (*Eph* 14:2). This interior silence is, for Ignatius, love, its unity and harmony, founded on the unity of Jesus with the Father; more precisely the unity of faith (God's gift of his unity with us) with love (as living by this unity), the harmony within the Church, which harmony is for him *the* word of God to the world (*Mag* 1:4; 6:8). It is not inappropriate that the silence of the love on which every word is founded is depicted in musical images, as the symphony of love, harmony of strings (*Eph* 4:1-2; 5:1). Certainly the mysteries of Christ, his being conceived and born of a virgin, his death on the cross are "three resounding mysteries, that were accomplished in the silence of God" (*Eph* 19:1), but it is not their visibility that is the greatest element: "Yet thereby our God Jesus Christ makes it all the more manifest that he is in the Father" (*Rom* 3:3); through his death he has disappeared and returned to the Father. Consequently the Romans are not to hinder

the death of Ignatius by ill-timed pleas: "For if you are silent about me, I shall be a word; but if you love my flesh, I shall be merely a sound" (*Rom* 2:1). Against the argument that "so is it written" Ignatius points to the living and life-giving word of Christ: "For me the documents of Jesus Christ, the sacred documents, are his cross, death and resurrection" (*Philad* 8:2).

Why should not this be held the authentic experience and interpretation of Christianity? Why should Gnosticism (with its *Sige* and *Hesychia*) have offered more than a mere word, not even a concept? What Ignatius learned by what he experienced was that this positive element, the Word as flesh, as resounding speech and as scripture, only has validity, is only understandable in conjunction with the infinite sphere which it witnesses to and reveals, and which is purely and simply the sphere of reality and of realization.

The dispute with the Gnostic myth, especially that of Valentine, rules out for Christian thought any possibility of designating God primarily as "silence" or "abyss". "Silence is for those the mother of all who come forth from the abyss, and she kept silence about everything she could not say, as inexpressible in words, but what she comprehended she declared beyond understanding" (*Extr ex Theod* 29). Clement, who observed this idea, introduced the theme of the secret mystery into Christian theology (*Strom* IV, 177; IV, 316); he also drew a parallel between the Greek poets' and dramatists' idea of the unknowability of God and the statements of scripture about the "God whom no man has ever seen" (*Jn* 1:18), about Paul's hearing "secret words which it is not granted to man to utter" (*2 Cor* 12:4), and about the unfathomable "depths of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God" (*Rom* 11:33), which might well justify the appellation abyss. But it is the incarnate Word that frees us from our limited conceptions and introduces us to that in God which surpasses our understanding.

When we have abstracted all that pertains to bodies and to the so-called incorporeal things, immersing ourselves in the greatness of Christ, and thence reverently proceeding to the infinite, then we will, in some degree, approach to a perception of the Almighty, and come to know, not what he is, but what he is not (*Strom* V, 71, 3).

This is for Clement the doctrine both of Plato and of Moses, the first step of the negative theology. For the Cappadocians the defense of the incomprehensibility of God against the heresy of Eunomius is the basic concern of Christian theology, for "through silence" do we honor the divine excellence, which reveals itself only to faith (*Gr Nyss C Eun* II, 105; I, 371). From there it seems but a step to the mystical silence of Neoplatonism which, for Proclus, is the condition for the ascent to God; taken over from him by Denis it is no longer the Logos but the angels who "proclaim the divine silence" (*Div N* 4, 2), and are themselves the reflection of "the goodness of the silence dwelling in the abyss" (4, 22).

But of God's peace and stillness, which the holy Justos calls soundlessness (*aphthenxia*), and his immobility in all his outgoings of which we have cognizance, in what manner this peace is silent and keeps at rest, how he is in himself and is disposed in his inmost being, and is supereminently one in his wholeness, and neither in his going into himself nor in his going out into the many loses his self-unity, but even in his proceeding into the all remains wholly within himself by reason of the superabundance of the unity of being transcending all: to express this, or even to think it, is not possible to any being (*Div N* II, 1).

It is along this way that Greek thought, echoing that of Asia as a whole or simply the longings of mankind, penetrated into Christian theology, where it served the purpose of keeping open the spaces of the divine infinity. In the words of the Areopagite one cannot point to anything definitely at variance with the Christian idea of God, apart from a certain abstractness, which itself is more suggested to the reader than intended by the writer. The "hierarchies" and the letters show that he did not turn away from the Word that is Christ, but tried to reach through its finite form to the infinite form. In this he followed Origen and his doctrine of the inner unity of the Word.

The total Word of God that was in the beginning with God . . . is something other than words. The one Word consists of many and various knowable contents, but . . . none of these words is "Word".

But whoever utters what pertains to the truth, even should he speak about everything and omit nothing, would yet always be saying but a single Word. The saints, who hold themselves always to the one Word as their end, are not given to much speaking.

Thus all the words of scripture are a single Word, "since each is gathered up in it as in the one Head" (*Orig in Joh V, 4-6*). The whole exegesis of Origen is concerned with the achievement of this movement to unity, with bringing out how the living and abiding Logos is present in every particle of meaning; in the Word lives the superword which was from the beginning. The unremitting movement of ascent on the part of the Alexandrian thinker was the outcome of his intense love of Jesus; but should one hesitate to commit himself to it he may well turn to Augustine, who taught the same about the silencing of words in the Word.

In the beginning was the Word. Only wordlessly can one come to a perception of this; it is not made apparent by the agency of human words. There we have a certain form, a form that is not formed, but the form of all the formed. . . . All is in him, and yet, since he is God, all is under him. We have said what is incomprehensible, what was read; and it was not read that man might understand it, but that it should afflict man because he does not understand it, and he loses himself in going forth into the apprehension of the unchanging Word. . . . We speak of God; what wonder, then, if you do not understand? For if you understand, it is not God. . . . Groping in the Spirit to touch God is great blessedness, to apprehend him an impossibility. . . . So the Word became flesh, to nourish us with the milk of those not yet grown up (*Serm 117; PL 38, 662-71*).

The "milk" teaches us the inadequacy of our knowledge, but in this life there is in fact no "solid food". The most solid is the act in which the Word became flesh, and this act is a silent word.

Likewise in silence, speaking through the facts themselves, Christ, our Lord, says: Wherewith to die I did not possess; thou, man, had not wherewith to live. I took from thee that whereby I might die for thee; take thou from me that whereby thou livest with me.

We perform a solemn exchange: I give to thee, give thou to me (*S Denis* 5, 5; *Morin* 26).

For Augustine, word and answer between God and man, Christ and the Church, exceeds all utterance so greatly that word disappears into wordless jubilation.

When you come near to yourself and begin to sense God thereby (*persentiscere*)—according as love grows in you, for God is love—then you sense something which you say, and yet do not say. For before you felt it, you intended to say it to God; now you begin to feel it, and feel that what you feel you cannot say. But have you learned from this that what you feel is unsayable; will you then be silent? Will you not praise? How, then, you say, can I praise? The little that I perceive, through a glass darkly, I cannot explain. Listen, then, to the advice of the psalm: Sing joyfully to God, all the earth! You understand the jubilation of all the earth, if you also rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord, do not divide up your rejoicing among different things. In the end, all the other can be expressed in some way; he alone, who spoke and all was made, cannot be expressed. He spoke, and we were made; but we cannot utter him. His word, by which we were uttered, is his Son; in order to be spoken, in some way, by us, he became weak. By rejoicing, we can answer his word, but not word for word (*En in ps* 95, n. 5-6).

What does singing joyfully to him mean? Not to be able to express in words what is sung in the heart (32 *en* 2; s. 1, 8). It is good for you to renounce your self in the praise of God, better than to advance in self-praise. For if you praise God, and cannot explain what you want to say, your thinking is extended inwards, and this extension makes you stronger in apprehension of him whom you praise (145, 4).

Here he inserts his mysterious sentence about the Adytum: "Est quasi adytum, quod dicitur penetrabile secretum (*Heb* 9:3), interius templi. Et quid est hoc? Quod solus sacerdos intrabat. Et forte ipse sacerdos est absconditum tabernaculum Dei" (26:10). [It is, as it were, the inmost temple, called the secret inner sanctuary of the temple. What does this mean? That only the priest would enter there. And perhaps the priest himself is the hidden tabernacle of God.] Indeed he is the countenance

of God himself: "*Abscondes eos in abscondito vultus tui*" (30:8). [You will hide them in the hiding place of your presence.]

Augustine also places the whole of philosophy in the very center of his theology; the mysterious way into the interior, followed by philosophy, religion and mysticism, is formed and illuminated all through by what is itself most interior, and only discovered because it reveals itself as word and truth. "God speaks through the truth itself, provided one is capable of hearing it in the Spirit" (*Civ D XI, 2*). Consequently, for Augustine all the words of revelation come together in a single word, love, which however speaks through deeds rather than words.

The word of Christ, who spoke as no other had spoken, who alone spoke as one having power, is nonetheless an insecure bridge between the wordlessness of the world and the superword of the Father. Something of this order was implied by Matilda of Magdeburg when she wrote, at the end of her fourth book:

Then spoke our Lord, Jesus Christ: Do thou speak, O Father, I will now be silent, as thou art silent in the mouth of thy Son, on fire with love, on account of the weakness of men. And my humanity spoke trembling and hesitant on account of the falsehood of the world, but the world repaid me with a bitter death (IV, 28).

Finally Nicholas of Cusa brings together the dialectic of word and superword with that of the descent of the Word into the silence of death.

We possess a Redeemer, who is a universal mediator, fulfills all things, and is the firstborn of every creature. This Jesus caused, from the beginning of the world, a unique voice to sound in the ears of his redeemed members, a voice gradually swelling until it sounded loudest in himself at the time when he gave up his spirit. This voice proclaims that there is no other life than life in the Word, and that the world, as it came forth from the Word, keeps in being by the Word and is led back to its origin. This return is effected by the subordinate beings, each in its order, being brought back by those that are higher, and the first of all, who brings back all the rest, is Jesus. No one returns to the state of blessedness, unless

he discards all stain and disfigurement, and becomes spiritual . . . in the purity of justification. That is the great voice sounding in the depths of our spirit, the voice which the prophets proclaim to us, urging us on to adore the one Creator, to practice virtue, to take refuge with the Redeemer, by whom we are enabled to transcend the life of the senses. After this voice, having sounded for millennia, had come to John, the voice of one crying in the desert, who pointed with his finger to the Redeemer, it took on human form, and, finally, after a long and varied course of teaching and miracles, designed to show us that, of all terrible things, the most terrible is what love must choose, ~~the~~ death of sense, he uttered a loud cry, and so departed (*Excitat* 1, 3).

These few passages may be taken as representative of countless others. They serve to bring out two things: that all the concrete historical facts of the Bible go far beyond the facts of secular history (Hegel's starting point in his phenomenology), and possess an inexhaustible significance in the interior sphere; and that this sphere is the proper setting of all mankind's religious perception in philosophy, poetry and ordinary life. Only if we see them in this context can we come to a true understanding of the full significance of revelation.

2

We can therefore say that the biblical facts possess an external historicity which forms, as it were, the basis of their participation in the actual world history. At the same time this external historicity is the place, the vessel and the physical expression of the real event of revelation, which is by no means merged and dissolved therein. It is strange that of the three that give testimony on earth to the truth, "the Spirit, the water, and the blood" (1 Jn 5:8), none is actually word, but all witness to the Word that is Christ: the Spirit as the God who inspires; the water as the active effect of the Word, namely the Church; the blood, finally, in the moment when the Word consummated his work in silence and in a loud, inarticulate cry. In these three

consists the main import of the word in its historical course, and all three point to its character as "prehistorical" (*das Urgeschichtliche*). In speaking of the word as prior to history we do not mean that it is merely above history. We might say that it pervades all history, meaning thereby that we are concerned with an event which took place at a certain historical time, and also, since it comes from God, that it touches the whole of history and every moment of it. The Spirit (as the presence and witness of God in the word of Christ) is what makes it thus primary or all pervasive in history, the water (as sacrament) is the transposition wrought by the Spirit of what took place once into the history of all times, and the blood is (in virtue of the hypostatic union) the event wrought and made permanent by the Son himself, a unique event yet ever reiterated. This "triunity" is the firm ground to which all previous revelation in history is directed. It is what unifies the original event of the divine revelation, which is also prehistorical, with the reality consisting of the events of secular history; it makes each presuppose the other if they are to be understood. In it therefore, in the fullest sense, the Word is made flesh.

Looking back from this standpoint on the long road leading to this event, on the Old Testament, we are obliged to say that the unification was there only in prospect, only imaged forth, only in promise. The *verbum caro*, the unity of what took place once, prior to history, with the continuous process of world history, was only tried out, and not necessarily always in the same way. And since it was a matter of a preliminary exercise, one and the same text for example could be taken up again by later writers, with their deeper experience, and reinterpreted accordingly, just as a pupil when more advanced may go back to and improve on his previous exercises. This brings out clearly that it is not in this instance so much a question of the exact nature of historical events as of the overall "right" expression for the essential, revelatory event embodied in that history. It was in the light of their deeper and clearer understanding that the Deuteronomists worked over the Heptateuch, and thus for the first time traced a continuous thread through the scattered traditions of the time of the judges, a primary theological thread, which then, secondarily in narrative form, was presented as a historical thread. Not only in the

work of the Deuteronomists but even in earlier recensions the historical and narrative was chosen as the most fitting embodiment for a supernatural experience of revelation, a consciousness of revelation.

Consequently, it is a question neither of abstracting from this narrative form so as to elicit some kind of general truth (as the moral of history), nor of always taking this embodiment for the thing itself, regardless of the difference between the two aspects of history. One may of course adopt, as a measure of prudence, the principle that all that is recorded should be taken as historical truth so long as the contrary is not established on historical and literary grounds, as for instance, with Jonah, Judith and Tobias. But we may well ask whether in recognizing that the Book of Jonah is a parable we do not lose some of the substance of revelation, and whether this is not also the case if we must regard, say, the story of Joseph as a purely literary composition, not to mention a great part of the story of the patriarchs, the various episodes of the exodus and of the entrance to the promised land. After all it is hardly likely that we can succeed in isolating from the narrative its "historical core" with a view to comparing the two; and besides it is not only the historical core but the narrative itself that is the object of inspiration and theologically relevant.

Why then should we be so zealous for proofs of historicity? We must be quite clear that the main dates of Israel's history are obviously historical, and equally so the facts of its special consciousness of revelation, expressed not only in its acts, conduct, worship and prayer but also in the way it interpreted and described its own history. This is the main consideration and it is not to be discarded, even though we have no need, theologically speaking, to attach particular weight to the historicity of details transmitted through so many and such varied channels. How much in the way of revelatory meaning might be added to a given historical fact! Is this not clearly the case with the episode of Melchizedek? And why should it not apply also to Abraham, though admittedly not quite a parallel case? Nor must we overlook the fact that Jewish history, the nearer it comes to the time of Christ, and so the more exact and susceptible of proof it becomes, the less eventful it appears in a theological sense. There was nothing like the same profound theological reflection among the Jews on the history of the

Maccabees as there was on the less certain events of their own origins, so pregnant with revelatory significance, or as there was on the times of the kings and the prophets, so conscious were they of the religious import of these. The latest writers, those who added the "deuterocanonical" narratives, were obviously concerned to employ that form which could comprise the deepest and widest theological content.

All this goes to show that the prehistorical content is seen steadily rising from the historical "form" to an ever greater height, like a mountain range in the background. It means that, through all the words of scripture, despite their inevitable limitations as human words, the *one* Word makes itself heard more and more decisively, and that Israel was profoundly conscious of this. Admittedly Israel possessed its national pride and, like any other people, was inclined to dramatize its own history. But its chief concern was to reduce the whole to the single act, at all times incumbent on it, of fidelity in faith to the God who was faithful to his people. This is shown in the compilation of Deuteronomy. This singleness of purpose is what Jesus in fulfilling carried over into the eternal covenant. It is what Paul pointed to in his relegation, as inessential, of the law and even of circumcision, making everything dependent on the faith of Abraham, the father of all believers, both Jews and gentiles. It is at the same time a relegation of every word insofar as it is not flesh.

But in fact this relegation could only occur when the Holy Spirit came forth from the risen Christ, who proclaimed himself, now become spiritualized in his humanity, as the truth of all salvation history, and of his own life and death history: "These are my words which I spoke to you when I was yet with you" (Lk 24:44). From his own being as Spirit he "took away the veil" (2 Cor 3:16) which lay over all the words and narratives of the Old and New Testaments, hiding their real meaning. This is why Paul was able to bring out the central doctrines of Christianity, with a truly astonishing freedom, without citing a single word of the gospel. It explains too how it was that he could make himself responsible for dispensing the gentiles from the tradition contained in the word and history, insofar as this tradition was not in its essence the spirit of God who revealed himself in word and history.

We Christians always fail to appreciate the abruptness of the passage from the old to the new aeon, signified by the Son giving up his spirit on the cross (*commendo spiritum meum, tradidit spiritum*), and by the investiture of the Holy Spirit with all freedom and power over the Son's word and flesh. "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you" (Jn 16:14), that is to say, of Christ's word and flesh. But one cannot say that the teaching of the Spirit is itself Word. It is the "glorification" of the Word and so united in the Trinity with the Word; but the Spirit is not the Word. This alone brings home to us what Paul meant when he was emboldened to emancipate the gentiles from the letter, to subject them to the Spirit. It makes us see also that the Christian mission to the world today is not one of subjecting the nations to the letter but to the Spirit. Certainly this does not mean the human spirit of religion, philosophy, mysticism, but the divine Spirit, which is itself freedom, far greater and more positive than the freedom of the human religious spirit from matter and the course of history; it is not contrasted with this human freedom as wholly other but takes and includes it within itself. Because of the "freedom wherewith Christ has made us free" (Gal 4:31) "the Spirit of the Lord is liberty" (2 Cor 3:17); but this does not mean that those freed have to hear him—it is the word we have to hear—but rather that they are moved, led, inspired by him (Gal 5:18; Rom 8:14), inwardly "minding the things of the Spirit" whose wisdom is "life and peace" (Rom 8:5-6). Everything leads into the *identity* of the Spirit who, on the one hand, is the "Spirit of Christ" (8:9), of him who "raised up Jesus from the dead" (8:11), and so of the Father—in short the Spirit of God; and on the other hand who is, in us ourselves, the "Spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father" (8:15), the Spirit who "asks for us with unspeakable groanings" (8:26), and whose desires in us "he that searches the hearts" knows (8:27). Through this identity of God's Spirit in God and in us is brought about the "manifestation" (*parrhêsia*), which is both the truth and its witness; "The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (8:16). On this account we have his "testimony in us" (1 Jn 5:10). But the identity in question is not to be conceived after the manner of Indian philosophy, void of all content. It is one which

comprises, in the Spirit and in the unity of its testimony, "water and blood" (1 Jn 5:6).

Only on this plane is a real dialogue possible between Christianity and other religions. There cannot be dialogue between a false autonomy and a true heteronomy; and this appears to be the alternative so long as we take the Word of God as a bare historical fact. But it was Christ's own will to transfigure, in his death, resurrection and ascension, the whole historical character of his revelation, endowing it with a universality such that all the aspirations of human religion and mysticism are caught up into it and surpassed to an infinite degree. And the unutterable bliss of the mystical experience wherein the finite spirit is freed of all limitations and taken up into the infinite Spirit, the bliss which the sages of China, India and of Sufism agree in valuing so highly, finds its fulfillment in the "marriage" through the Spirit between God and creation. Only here the liberation has nothing negative about it. It is not brought about by an ascetic denial of all that is finite as illusion and *maya* but by union in love with the Spirit of Christ; nor by one's own activity of detachment (abstraction), but by abandonment to the activity of the Spirit (*agethai*). The first procedure can only lead to an identity that consists in nirvana, at the cost of discarding all finite reality; but the second leads to an identity resulting in fulfillment, where all that is finite is transfigured.

There has never been any other way by which the finite, estranged from God, could be both opened out to the infinite and raised above itself than the *verbum caro*. Yet Scheeben was right in treating under the title marriage even this first *commercium*, the union of the two natures in Christ, together with all that is connected with it as preparation and consequence. However much the word in revelation may act in a positive, historical and juridical fashion it is always, and primarily, the expression of the divine and human *con-nubium*, whose final and perfect stage is necessarily wordless, intimately in fact, not the I-thou relationship but the sudden flashpoint of fusion. Scheeben, both in his *Mysteries of Christianity* and his *Dogmatic Theology* revived the great patristic and Scholastic tradition, which alone can lead to a real dialogue with the world's great religions and philosophies.

3

Hen is the characteristic word of that mysticism which ascends by renunciation of the finite. *Pan* is the attempt to bring back the finite despite this renunciation. *Hen kai pan* remains an aspiration of the heart which may well be postulated and assented to as the ultimate ideal, but one which it lacks any power to attain. What applies to mysticism applies also to philosophy. It can and must postulate that nothing of that which is extraneous to the unity of being, and that in all that is the revelation of being is to be discerned; but it cannot prove, or desire to prove, that the creature is coincident with the Creator or simply a mode of him. From the *hen* to the *pan*—the two, after all, belong together—the bridge joining them can only be thrown by God. If this bridge is what the Christian religion consists in, then “there arises the infinite demand that the content of religion should vindicate itself also to thought, and this necessity is not to be eluded.”

These are the words of Hegel (*Philosophy of Religion* 1832, II, 280). His theology and philosophy of the Spirit stand face to face. The positive cannot be the ultimate.

The Bible has this positive form, though it is one of its proverbs that the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. So the question is which spirit applies, which spirit makes the word come alive. . . . It is the spirit which begins, in this manner, with the positive, but which is essentially present: it must be the true, the right, the Holy Spirit, who comprehends and knows the divine and this content as divine (165–66).

Thus “religion is more closely determined as the self-consciousness of God” (151) and revelation, at its height the incarnation of God, as its full explication. “This history is the explication of the divine nature itself” (250). God had to become man, otherwise the *hen* and the *pan* would remain separate for eternity. But only in one single man could God become incarnate, for the Asiatic mind is always prone to the view that

dwelling in the body and becoming singular and individualized is an abasement of the spirit. Therein consists the determination of

the untruth, of the purely material side, of immediate existence. But, on the other hand, the determination of immediate existence is, at the same time, an essential one, the culminating expression of the spirit in its subjectivity. . . . The factor of immediate existence is contained in the spirit itself. . . . The natural is not an extrinsic necessity, but the spirit as its subject, in its infinite relationship to itself, has the determination of immediateness therein. If then the nature of the spirit and the nature of God is to be revealed to men in the whole development of the idea, to that extent this form must also occur in it, and this is precisely the form of finitude (236).

Therefore Christ is "Son of God and Son of Man; this is simply to be accepted; the true sense of this expression cannot be explained away" (248). And when he dies for all the world, then "God has died, God is dead—this is the most terrifying thought, all truth is not, negation itself is in God" (249). But the resurrection annuls this finitude, including death, and is the proof of the power of the Spirit, which is absolute self-presence (276), and, as "community consciousness" of the reconciliation between God and the world, signifies the true transfiguration of the history of God in Jesus. The limits are justified in that they are transcended, and from them result the concreteness, the determination of God as totality. "The form, the determination, is not only finitude, the limit, but [as] form, as totality of form[s], is itself the concept, and these forms exist necessarily and essentially" (286). For this reason true philosophy can only be theology, for only God is "the absolute truth; and so nothing else has any value as compared with God and his explication". But for this reason this last thing is also true: "Thought is the absolute judge, before which the content has to justify and vindicate itself" (287). "Philosophy . . . sets forth the reconciliation of God with himself and with nature; it means that nature, the being-other, is in itself divine" (288).

Thus there is a communication for the *hen* to the *pan* over the bridge of the Trinity and the incarnation of God, but in such wise that the finite and the infinite Spirit are identical; and God cannot find himself otherwise than in man. It is certainly a transfiguration of history, but one in which prayer and the "unspeakable groaning of

the Spirit" are replaced by the concept and a knowledge which is anything but groaning, and ultimately by a grotesque collapse of spirituality.

The sphere of the Spirit which arches over the historical word of God is quite a different one. The *hen* unites itself to the *pan* (to be *panta en pasin*—I Cor 15:28) in a freedom which no concept can comprise and for which no philosophy is appropriate. For this reason the kingdom of God cannot be confined within historical time, neither in the prophetic form of Joachim of Flora nor in the philosophical form of Hegel; it must always remain open, eschatologically, in the new aeon. We are only granted a "pledge", a "foretaste", a guarantee of what is to come, not a delivery; "for we are saved by hope . . . for what a man sees, why does he hope for?" (Rom 8:24). It is not the conscious concept that arches over the word, but the yearning Spirit of consolation which, as such, guarantees the freedom and all the gifts of insight.

The Word of God has come forth into history from the silence and secrecy of God; this the martyr Ignatius understood correctly. And Paul before him took his stand on this historical event. "My gospel proclamation", side by side with the "*kerygma* of Jesus Christ", is preached "according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept *secret* from eternity" (Rom 16:25). And to the Colossians he wrote that they may be "instructed in the charity . . . and in the knowledge of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ Jesus, in whom are *hid* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3); to the Ephesians that they "may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other generations *was not known* to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph 3:4-5). Yet we must observe that the content of this secret, now revealed, is not solely the positive word of scripture or of Jesus in the gospel, nor taken by itself the redemption by his death, but rather what is contained, yet hidden, in the incarnation, namely the "*unsearchable* riches of Christ" and "the dispensation of the mystery which has been *hidden* from eternity in God, who created all things" (Eph 5:9-9). This means therefore that hidden and enclosed in the world plan of the Creator rests the plan to reestablish, in the fullness

of time, all things in heaven and earth in Christ the Head (Eph 1:10), a plan that even when proclaimed cannot be understood but which demands that

you be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man; that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts; that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ which surpasses all knowledge; that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph 3:16-19).

If the word was silent previously it is now, according to revelation, so rich and luxuriant (hyperbole, *perisseuein*) that further speech and utterance fails, and we are reduced to a knowledge of how greatly love surpasses knowledge. This is truly going beyond thought into act, not our own act but God's act in us; it means giving up our own knowledge in order to be possessed by God's knowledge (1 Cor 8:3; 13:12; 2 Cor 5:11; Gal 5:9; Eph 2:10; Phil 3:12; Jn 6:28-29). This is Spirit. This is religion. This is both the fulfillment and the transcending of all history. But the relationship of Logos and Spirit cannot be contained in any concept. If the Spirit proceeded from the Logos alone then it would perhaps be the glorification of the Word alone, as its highest emanation. But the Spirit also proceeds from the Father, and does so inasmuch as the Son looks back to the Father in eternity and returns to him in time. This means that the Word, which became and remains flesh, is glorified as *returning to its origin*; only as such will he come again to bring the world to an end, and home to the eternal silence of the Father.

WORD AND REDEMPTION

THE PLACE OF THEOLOGY

I

The Word that is God became man, without ceasing to be God. The Word that is infinite became finite, without ceasing to be infinite. The Word that is God took a body of flesh, in order to be man. And because he is Word, and, as Word, took flesh, he took on, at the same time, a body consisting of syllables, scripture, ideas, images, verbal utterance and preaching, since otherwise men would not have understood either that the Word really was made *flesh*, or that the divine Person who was made flesh was really the *Word*. All scriptural problems must be approached through christology: the letter is related to the Spirit as the flesh of Christ (we know what that means: his human nature) to his divine nature and Person.

In the factual order this means that the flesh and its manifestation are of no avail, if we do not reach through the flesh to the Spirit (see Paul), if, in the flesh, we do not hear, see, feel after the Spirit (see John). The letter is important and worthy of attention insofar as it can be a bridge to the Spirit, and the finiteness of human concepts, images and words, insofar as they can afford us access to the infinity of the divine Logos. And in the order of knowledge this means that an initial attitude to revelation in flesh and letter is right only if we are always prepared to be led through the finiteness of flesh and the letter to the infinity of the divine truth, which is one with the divine Person of the Son (inseparable from, and essentially one with the Father and the Spirit). The true preparation is faith. Faith is the surrender of the finite person in his entirety to the infinite Person. Where value is concerned, particularly where truth and knowledge are concerned, however, that same surrender is love, which in the temporal structure of existence (and the various modes of its intersection with the eternity indwelling there) reveals itself as hope.

There are two contrasting forms of existence. There is the existence of an infinite Person, who is the Word, within the flesh and the

earthly and finite embodiment of his divine and infinite fullness. For the Word as flesh is a Word that is lived to the very limit, and, where the flesh takes the form of the letter, it is filled to the very limit with Spirit—filled not only with divine and infinite content, but with a divine and human content, lived, that is to say, in the bodily existence of Christ. The other existence is that of the believer, insofar as faith (a grace given by the infinite Person) is, for men, the only thing adequate to the incarnate God. Surrender to the Infinite, surrender that knows no limits in principle, is the initial attitude possible to man which prepares the way for the finite factors of revelation, flesh and the letter, to be understood as what they really are, namely as the utterance and expression of the Infinite.

This surrender implies, in the first place, an absolute will and readiness to encounter God in what is human, and the infinite content in the finite concept. It is, therefore, an attitude of adoration; from the very outset, one approaches the word of God, the scripture, on one's knees, prostrate, in the conviction that the written word has within it the spirit and power to bring about, in faith, contact with the infinity of the Word. It has this power all the more because the word of scripture is not prior to the cross—flesh, that is to say, in the Old Testament sense, allowing its inner divine content to appear only exceptionally, as on Tabor—but a word subsequent to the cross—flesh that has risen, the letter already steeped in the infinity and glory of God. Nor is it a word that the resurrection has passed over, leaving no trace on it, so that the inner form and letter of the New Testament could be placed alongside that of the Old, as though the two were on a level. On the contrary, its very essence is to witness to the resurrection; even more, it is a word of the risen Christ (who, in those forty days, interpreted to the Church both himself and the Old Testament), who poured his spiritualized humanity, his finitude now rendered infinite, into the mold of an utterance accessible to us, a sequence of finite concepts. This word we can only encounter in an attitude of adoration which not only acknowledges its absolute rightness over and above all human views, contrary or not, but on principle causes all finite perceptions and interpretations to be surmounted and filled out by an infinite range of meanings.

In the second place, the surrender in question means the will to make this infinite meaning (to which no knowledge in time can attain) the ground of one's own existence ("Be it done to me according to thy word"), that is to say, not only to live in the presence of the Word, but to live by its power and in view of it. The Word is a Word lived to the utmost limit, incarnated, put to death, resurrected and, now glorified, at once infinite and finite, guiding, from above and within, the entire existence of the man surrendered to it in faith; so much so that, in his life, he perceives what the life of Christ is, both in him and in itself, and his own life becomes a witness and echo of the Word in time. In the holiness of the communion of saints the world should come to learn what the holiness (that is, the divineness) of the incarnate Word on earth was. Without this holiness of the Word we live by, the holiness of the Word we worship would lack full incarnational truth. The Word in the world has the power to turn speculative truth into actual living, the exercise of authority into holiness of life, theology into Christian practice, reflection into irrefutable witness of life to the point of martyrdom. This is what its credentials consist in, but they derive ultimately from men's utter surrender to it and adoration in faith, hope and love to the indwelling Word.

Whatever external graces and "signs" the Church has been endowed with by her Founder are not ends in themselves, but means to the above-mentioned end and incentives to its attainment. The infused holiness of the Church as "institution" is simply the source and starting point of the interior and practical holiness of the Christian, which is what her Founder intended thereby. Her given unity, made visible in the hierarchy, is simply the basis for that living, perfect unity of love which inwardly sustains and builds up the body of Christ. The totality (catholicity) of the truth and love implanted in her by her Founder must be continuously unfolded in fullness of life by the workings of the Holy Spirit; apostolicity, the exterior uninterrupted succession in time, is simply the guarantee and starting point for all generations of Christians, of an ever-fresh and immediate relation to the apostles and, through them, to Christ, an incentive to seek this ever anew and to renew the apostolic witness by their own

holiness of life. To call these "means" is not to say that, once the end is reached, they can be discarded. They are part of the structure of the Church in the world and, so long as she retains her present form, so long must they endure. But when this structure passes away, the means also pass away; already they have within themselves an element directing them to what is quite other, and alone an end in itself: adoration and holiness, in other words, love of God and one's neighbor.

This applies to the whole official side of the Church. Thus it applies equally to theology, insofar as it is something other than direct adoration of the divine Word in the finite word, other than the act of direct obedience to the Word in the Christian life. To that extent therefore, and lying between these two interdependent poles of the Christian's intercourse with the Word of God, there is intercalated something which might be called theorizing about the Word of God—a form of contemplation which is neither an act of worship nor conjoined with action wherein the truth is embodied. Like all the modes in which the Church sets forth her teaching, theology can only be oriented toward these two poles, and so toward the purity and fullness of the Church's teaching, with which it partially coincides. For, while being a special form of the Church's teaching (the theologian, too, has an official role), theology is, at the same time, a function, a corrective, a preliminary to the official teaching. Together with this latter and the sacraments, theology is a means, an active agency for pouring the infinite riches of divine truth into the finite vessels in which revelation is given to us, so that the believer may be made capable of encountering this infinity in adoration and active obedience. Revealed truth, since it is both divine truth and the truth we live by, is so constituted that the amount of truth in theology (as it prepares the way to worship and a life of obedience) must be measured in terms of worship and practical obedience. For Christ is no theory, not even insofar as he is the truth (not the truth as human knowledge is true). The flame of worship and obedience must burn through the dispassionateness of speculation, as it always does through the entire Word of God: the Word that was Christ, and that gave itself to be consumed in this same fire; the word that once again is Christ

and is called "scripture", the letter aglow with the Spirit and fire, scorching those who approach it without first taking off their shoes.

Now, in the very fact of God's existence in the flesh, there must be a level on which the word of God (since it is a truly human word) meets with other human words. This is the level of disputation, of argument. This level is laid open to being controverted, to arguments for and against, to the cavils and quibbles of the scribes, to the groping incomprehension of the disciples, to the doubtings of the fearful, who "see men as trees" (Mk 8:24). God's word here always speaks with the same infinite superiority that characterized it in the Old Testament, but always in the same human situation. It lets itself enter into human contact and man's concerns. It lays itself open to contradiction, to argumentation, to syllogistic and theological deduction. Coming out into the open, it denudes itself. In this consists the abasement of the Word, from the very beginning, that so stirred Hamann that he made it the center of his theology: the condescension not only of the Lord to the status of servant, but of the sovereign Spirit to the servitude of the letter, and this in the very act of creation, culminating in his embodiment in the Church. Yet it must always be borne in mind that this concession to human understanding is only made for the purpose of leading it away from its own natural level to that of faith and to a corresponding decision. Furthermore (and this is very clear in John), all theological dispute with the Word is a stage on the way either to the act of faith or of disbelief. The argument with the Samaritan woman, the adulteress, the man born blind, is itself of redemptive import, leading to an act of total adoration in the person involved; that with the Jews is itself a severance of relations, a judgment on the obduracy of the disputants; and, for this reason, the passion of the Word in John is, at this point, already in course of enactment. These are the hours of darkness, when the light shines in the night of man's refusal to understand. They are the first stage in the killing of the divine Word, the beginnings of a philology that has no intention of issuing in adoration and obedience, but is sufficient to itself. "Your testimony is not true." They are a theology which, while it takes up stones, goes on speaking. And we see how the apparent neutrality of disputation looks from the standpoint of God's eternal

decree. No prolonged dwelling in the stage of theory is permitted the Church's theology, any more than to the Jews in their contact with the Word of God. Not for a single moment can theology forget its roots, from which all its nourishment is drawn: adoration, in which we see, in faith, the heavens opened; and obedience in living, which frees us to understand the truth.

2

From what we have said above, many conclusions follow regarding the structure of theology. In the first place, a general truth: that in theology all that has to do with the finite aspect of the Word (with concepts, images, the letter) must be considered solely a means to reaching the infinity incarnated therein. There is urgent need of a thorough investigation into the formal logic of the mode of speech and thought of the Word of God. This would of necessity bring out how the formal laws of human speech and thought are in no way superseded, but rather carried up to a higher plane, since all the laws applying to what is finite become functions of a truth infinite in every "part" or manifestation, and not susceptible of being parceled into finite dictums and laws. Such an investigation would bear many points of resemblance to that of Bultmann, and yet would be very different. It would not approach the Word of God through any philosophic, existential presuppositions, but would be developed from the basic fact of the incarnation (accepted in faith). It cannot be said that, through the incarnation, or even through the resurrection, human "flesh" (human nature with all its laws of finite being and thought) has been "relativized". That would be, once again, a category of this world, finite and wholly inadequate for this absolutely unique, unparalleled event. This is why modernism, though often near the mark, was basically off-target.

Neither history nor evolution nor philosophy has the Word for its province, but faith alone, which requires that theology be presented in such a way as to foster a more profound spirit of adoration, a more

exact obedience in practice. The theologian, therefore, is required to apply the laws of human thinking in such a way as to bring out clearly the law of faith. The laws of thought are primarily concerned with drawing limits, defining, even if this is done so as subsequently to interrelate more precisely the fields thus delimited. So long as the various contents of truth are themselves finite, there is nothing to object to in this process of defining and contrasting. The case is otherwise when the laws of faith come into action, for then the truth comprised within the drawn limits is the same (not only generically, but substantially and personally) as the truth outside them. The drawing of the boundary does not involve falsehood (for it is all part of the movement of the Word's incarnation), provided that one is always aware of the presence, within the boundary, of the unbounded, the presence in the concept of what is beyond concept, in the definition of the presence of the divine object of faith. And this applies even more to the subsequent operations in which this first delimited sphere (of infinite content) is brought into relation with others (also of infinite content).

In other words, every concept in theology must be catholic, universal, which means it must present the whole truth, either by drawing it into itself or by opening itself out thereto, discarding its own boundaries, dying in order to rise again into the truth which is of heaven. This is the work of faith, not of a Hegelian dialect of knowledge; it is the work of a knowledge that is itself a faith which seeks, and then finds according to the measure of adoration, obedience and grace. A Catholic concept is by no means the same as a Platonist or Aristotelian one, for the simple reason that God's Word in human form (flesh or scripture) is not just any kind of word. The "inclusiveness" or "openness" that is the essence of Catholic logic does not authorize us to allow everything to drift away into a kind of vague infinity, as furthering devotion. On the contrary, it is the most stringent requirement in thinking there could be. It demands that our thinking should be continuously and deliberately subject to the Word of God not only in its content, but also in its form, in the very act of thought—which must, perforce, bear the mark of Catholic logic. Theology is the expression of the verdict passed by the divine word

over the human. This is, in fact, the form taken, from the beginning, by the entire word of scripture; and it is impossible for theology to evade this form.

From this general characteristic follows the detail of theology, its material.

1. This material, in its whole range, its basic structure, its essential features, must be governed according to revelation, and this in the way in which it actually was given in history—or, more precisely, as it happened historically within the human race and is described in scripture. This means, in the first place, that theology has to understand and interpret the divine content in this history and not leave it to one side while drawing from it an unhistorical, supratemporal (and thus not truly eternal) “moral of history”. The incarnation is no mere “figure” of a truth, but truth itself. It means, further, that theology has to consider this history (for even the didactic parts of the Old and New Testaments are a function of the history) in its essential course, and not simply in certain episodes or concepts chosen at will. Scripture is not a quarry out of which theology can hew individual sentences to suit its purpose. It is the witness of a total event, a unity in itself; and it is as a totality that it is the object of theology.

The proportions of the structure of theology must be governed by those of revelation, that is to say, not of scripture as a book, but of the event described in scripture. The Holy Spirit is always sovereign in this sphere; he breathes where he will, leads into all truth in the way he chooses, and throws his light on the meaning of the Word in the sources of revelation according to his will. Therefore we must always read scripture in the light of the Spirit (the Spirit of the Church and of Catholicism). This does not imply that the theologian is entitled to settle down comfortably in some corner, to specialize there, without further concern with the totality of revelation. There is, of course, bound to be specialization, owing to the limitations of science. But the difference between theology and other sciences is that in the former the object is not a finite one, corresponding to the limitations of our powers. And there is another, even more important difference: whereas in other sciences progress consists in increasing differentiation and refinement of the subject matter, here the work leads further

and further in the direction of the infinity that pertains to the object, which has presented itself to us in a finite form adapted to our understanding. A man can write on theology without being obliged to deal with the whole of it; but he must always preserve the totality, the catholicity of truth in every detail of his thought.

However important mariology may be in these times, one cannot escape the impression that it affords a welcome excuse for theologians to avoid subjects which, if the proportions of revelation are to be preserved, demand greater attention, but also more courage and expository skill. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of the redemption, of the resurrection, of predestination and eschatology bristle with problems that all too often we prefer to bypass. Such an attitude is inexcusable. The thought of previous generations (even if it has resulted in conciliar definitions) is never a pillow for future thought to rest on. Definitions are not so much an end as a beginning. Nothing that is the fruit of hard struggle is ever lost to the Church, but this does not mean that the theologian is spared further work. Whatever is merely put in storage, handed down without any fresh efforts being made on one's own part (and *ab ovo*, the very source of revelation) putrifies, like the manna did. And the longer the living tradition has been broken through purely mechanical repetition, the more difficult it may become to renew it.

2. The whole span of revelation, which provides the basic dimension of theology, broadens as theology becomes the regulative principle not of a timeless, but of a contemporary preaching and teaching of the word. This does not, of course, mean that theology must adopt a servile and timorous attitude toward current fashions of thought, so as to "keep abreast of the times" (for example, by becoming existentialist or by demythologizing), or that it should provide an apologetic palatable to modern man, but that, in obedience to its own inmost law, it should attend to the light which the Holy Ghost sheds here and now on revealed truth. The Spirit who breathes where he will is not the mild, diffused, timeless beacon of the Enlightenment always present in the same fashion. Rather he is the Spirit of missions and special functions within the mystical body, the Spirit who, in fulfilling the Old Testament, continues its historical course, in which ever new,

unforeseeable tasks sent by God erupt. It would indeed be all too simple (and a complete justification of Buber's penetrating objections) if the Christian could ignore the tremendous and inescapable unrest created in us by a revelation at once contemporaneous and leading into the future, and could live on in the past, that forever is sinking further into the past. Yet who, if not the theologian, is the watchman on the tower ready to proclaim the hour not of world history, but of Christian history, reading for us today the signs in the meridian light of eternal revelation?

There are, of course, many signs by which to read and interpret and to discern the spirits. There are, first of all, the different kinds of sanctity and of missions conferred on a given epoch, which may in turn call attention to the modes of sanctity of earlier times and, in the light of the present and its needs, make them more comprehensible. Those who truly adore and are truly obedient are those in whom the present truth of the Word is most clearly embodied. Their life is doctrine put into practice; and if they have a special mission in life, it throws an especially actual and God-intended light on doctrine. It is a light of the Spirit, illuminating the light of the Son. There is no question of persons involved, still less any question of psychology or biography, but rather one of the intrinsic content of mission, insofar as it is the voice, the word and the light of God for the times.

The same light will not be withheld from the theologian himself, provided that, in his work, he draws on the spirit of adoration and obedience. It is the self-same light that unfailingly guides the teaching authority (and thereby points the way for the individual theologian), on condition that, also for the official leaders of the Church and community, it is a light sought for in prayer and suffering, and not simply borrowed, something taken out of storage. Here we come up against profound and terrible mysteries concerning the Church: the "angels of the churches" are under the most severe judgment of the Lord of the Church, for this Lord does not tolerate any complacent dependence on office alone, any decline in initial fervor and love, but demands the utmost zeal of watchman and shepherd. The theologian who lets himself be guided by authority must have an especially

strong sense of his own responsibility toward the teaching authority, for, if he is exercised thoroughly in obedience to the Spirit, his own suggestions, emendations, his general view or new insight may have an important part to play in the formulation of doctrine and its promulgation.

3. The third and most difficult question can now be approached, that of the relation between revelation today (1 and 2) and tradition yesterday, a relation resulting in tradition today. Its difficulty stems from the fact that, since tradition must always remain a living principle, the theology of all past ages has to be incorporated as a living thing, it being remembered that the guidance of the Spirit yesterday is not identical with that of today; in fact, insofar as it was guidance for a particular situation in the past, it cannot be applicable to the present.

This does not mean we must look with suspicion at the formulations, the systems and worldviews of the theology of the past. Suspicion is an unprofitable attitude and the reverse of inclusive. What it does mean, what it requires, is that the theology of today must have such a certainty and fullness—derived from the eternal fullness of revelation, of the Spirit given at this time, and of the fullness of the tradition received—as to embrace the riches of past theology as a living thing, and to endow it with fresh vitality. But if the theologian of today is to preserve a living contact with the tradition of yesterday, he has the grave responsibility of conjoining his reverence for the abiding words of the Fathers, the Scholastics, the spiritual writers with an undimmed view of the temporal element from which none are exempt.

Nothing brings so much harm in its train as the failure to appreciate a historical context. It is bound adversely to affect the theology of the present. It is an ostrich-like proceeding—with this difference, that the ostrich, in hiding its head in the sand, counts on not being seen at all, whereas the theologian, hiding in the sands of timelessness, hopes, despite his disregard of history, to be taken account of by history. What is required is neither an enthusiastic revival of something or other (for example, the "Fathers"), nor pure historical research, but rather that kind of Christian humanism that goes to the sources to find what is living and truly original (and not to a school of thought long since dried up), in a spirit of joy and freedom able to weigh the

true value of things. This is the spirit from which we may hope for a tradition that is truly contemporary.

Like all good things in the world, the capacity to hand down requires a full measure of freedom, responsibility and Christian audacity. We can see this very clearly in the way in which St. Paul handed down what was delivered to him. Anyone without that capacity who wants to form a link in the chain of tradition, and hands down the goods of theology more or less like a workman passing bricks from hand to hand so that they are least likely to be damaged, is profoundly misled—simply because thoughts are not bricks; and, besides, since the first Easter morning, the fight between Spirit and stone, the stone which held the body captive, has not slackened.

These three lines of reflection serve, simply, to mark out a space, and to incite theology to build on it. Having seen it, one finds it difficult to understand why so few theologians have attempted the task; and even those few have applied themselves to only a section of the edifice, and left the main part alone. It is useless to look to theological commissions; their business is to point out what is defective. We need individuals who devote their lives to the glory of theology, that fierce fire burning in the dark night of adoration and obedience, whose abysses it illuminates.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANITY

If Christ were no more than the supreme example of natural man, and Christianity only the noblest form of natural religion, it would now no longer be worthwhile being a Christian. Our assessment of what belongs to history is subject to fluctuation, and some past or future person might dispute Christ's preeminence. Since in Christ God became man, Christianity is bound, in the eyes of unbelievers, to seem merely human. But for the believer this view is not simply a partial misunderstanding; it is a complete misapprehension, a scandal, however solemnly and religiously it be expressed, as in the act of the high priest rending his garments, when he heard the answer of Christ. For faith, all human religions and philosophical systems seem to approximate to one another, and Christianity seems to become more and more isolated. However variegated the shopwindow display of philosophies of life may seem, from a distance they come to look very much alike, all equally of human provenance and human proportions.

Their scale, however, is limited, and likewise their application. What man can achieve unaided, what he can discover and sketch out in the way of a philosophy of life can be surveyed and grasped in its general lines, even if not in all its details, and classified. However bold his mental flights, whether in a dirigible or a rocket, he invariably takes himself along on the journey. In other words, human thought, philosophical or religious, starts out from man, ascends with him, operates on his scale. This does not thereby make it "immanent in the world", confined to man and his world. It is, in fact, in his intention, "world-transcending" in the sense of Pascal: *L'homme passe infiniment l'homme*. Yet however much man transcends himself, the act of transcending is, as the word betrays, an act posited, ventured, in reference to man. Even when he negates himself in order to affirm the other, he can only understand the affirmation in relation to what he negates.

It would be a want of gratitude to the Creator to represent this power of transcending as nugatory, this mode of contact with what is beyond the world as a mere *fabrica idolorum*, and necessarily blasphemous. But it would be equally lacking in gratitude to the

Redeemer and giver of grace not to see in grace something wholly new and other, crowning and perfecting man's attempts, precisely because it first shatters and overturns them. The natural man and his reason go out beyond themselves, they are "transcending"; God's grace, which we take hold of in faith, is something indwelling; and in that sense "immanent". It is not our movement toward God, but God's movement to us. It is heaven projected into our world. It is a participation in the divine nature, essentially as sanctifying grace, consciously as faith, hope and charity. The natural man is man seeking God, grace is God who has found man. The former is the man who applies himself to a kind of spectral analysis of his own being so as to deduce therefrom the composition of the star from which he has proceeded as if by radiation, and with which he must have some sort of kinship. The latter is the descent of the divine light among men not only to illuminate, purify and warm them, but, through grace, to make them also shine with a light not of this world. It should never be forgotten that these two movements are in opposite directions. It is true that the first is for the sake of the second, and so is, in some way, a condition of it; also that the first cannot be understood, in the Creator's design, apart from the second, which is its justification and the solution to its riddles. But all this belongs to another part of the inquiry, and we shall return to it at the end.

Before making a synthesis, it is necessary to distinguish what is to be united. Otherwise, if we carry over, just as they are, the categories and conclusions of philosophy into the sphere of faith and theology, we do a disservice to both, divinizing what is secular, and secularizing what is divine. The work of synthesis, moreover, is not to be carried out on the abstract plane, by speculating on the relation between the natural and the supernatural; it is ultimately a matter of christology. For in Christ, God and man, God has opened himself to the world, and in this movement of descent has determined the course of every mode of ascent of man to him. Christ is the one and only criterion, given in the concrete, by which we measure the relations between God and man, grace and nature, faith and reason; and Christ is, though he has a human nature, a divine Person. This is the determining factor in the relationships. His humanity is the expression and

instrument of the divinity, and by no means is the divinity the expression and instrument of the humanity. In every respect, the humanity is fulfilled in that it sees itself, with all its upward stirrings, brought into the service of God's revelation, into the downward movement of his grace and love.

The peculiarity of the standpoint of faith in contrast with that of reason will be brought out by three examples, all converging from different directions into the one center.

I

Created being is characterized by an inner tension, a nonidentity, which has been described by Thomism in recent years as a "real distinction" between essence and existence. This tension of finite being, as created, is not its own existence, but receives it, or, in other words, never realizes its essence in its totality, but is always in process of becoming. This is what distinguishes the creature from the divine being, always perfectly fulfilled, absolutely identical with itself—a contrast greater than any similarity between them, *in tanta similitudine major dissimilitudo* [such perfect likeness yet how unlike]. It is a distinction not merely to our way of thinking, but inherent in the very being of things—*distinctio realis*, or, at least, *cum fundamento in realitate*, which, taken seriously, leads to the first—and sets its stamp on the whole *life* of the finite being, and lies at the root of its structure as indicated by Aristotle: the tension between act and potency in its living, moving dynamism of charged potentiality and self-realizing actuality, and always a tension which is a striving toward an end: *entelecheia*. If this life is *spirit*, its basic constitution may be conceived in the following categories: on the theoretical plane, it moves between the poles: potentiality—actuality, ideal—reality; on the practical plane between the poles: value—being, obligation—performance. Now if the concept of entelechy also implies that "ideality" and obligation are not extraneous to being, but deeply embedded in reality and being, then the movement and tension spring from some lack, some short-

coming in this reality, making it reach out beyond itself. For it to be and remain in being, it must become; become what it is, and yet, since it is becoming, is not yet; to maintain itself it must strive, and, in striving, fulfill its own law. This law, insofar as unfulfilled, is abstract; if it is to become living in the concrete, it must be realized anew in each individual. The life of the created spirit is only vigorous when it is constantly in process of self-realization; it starts to languish the moment it becomes satisfied with what it has already attained. Even what it has in fact inherited it must win for itself, in order to possess it. Only as an incomplete indigent life is it a parable of eternal life, as intended by the Creator. Thus, in its very striving, in that very dissimilar act, it is similar to the nonstriving, eternally fulfilled life of God.

God, however, in giving us his grace and infusing, along with it, faith, hope and charity, gives us a participation in his eternal life, something beyond all the life of striving which is that of the creature. Eternal life, the unattainable end of all human striving, is opened up to us in grace and made present. "He that believes has eternal life." He has it in faith, not in vision, but he has it not only eschatologically, as promised, but also as a present reality. Through grace, he is a son of God not only in the future, but here and now; he is not only called to be, but is a brother of Christ. It is a grace of sonship and brotherhood that he has received, making him a new creature, born again, transplanted, causing him to die to himself for Christ to live in him. It places deep in his heart the witness of the Holy Spirit, testifying this sonship to his own spirit, and so he no longer lives of and for himself, but by the power of Christ and of God, by God's love which is poured out into his heart by the Holy Spirit. He lives, henceforth, by Christ's love, given him so that he may love his brethren by the power of this love, give his life for them, as Christ the Redeemer did. Grace is indeed not separative, but unitive. It would be an incorrect emphasis to say that "only" by grace are we what Christ is by nature, namely sons of God, as though grace created a disparity. What we ought to say is that grace is so great that we, out of pure grace, in our own way, may claim to be what Christ, the giver of grace, is by nature in his singular way.

The divine nature being necessarily transcendent, the creature's

participation in it can only be explained by taking as our starting point the hypostatic union in Christ. Christ is unique in that he is not one creature among all the others, on a par with them; this is witnessed to by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit and signified by the virginity of his Mother. His creaturely status is an expression and function of his eternal and uncreated Sonship. This is the real ground and justification of the Council of Ephesus' anti-Nestorian definition of μία φύσις even when taken in conjunction with the Chalcedonian δύο φύσεις. In virtue of the hypostatic union the eternal Son of Man (under the law of the real distinction) can represent the Trinity in the world. The extent to which he does so (Jn 1:18) has not yet been sufficiently explored in theology. This, however, is not our present concern, which is rather to bring out that the whole of Christian ethics must be christologically based and, therefore, does not primarily consist in the Greek idea of man imitating God (μίμησις θεοῦ), but in the gospel idea of the following of Christ (ἀκολουθέω, for which scripture, significantly enough, has no adequate corresponding substantive). Following Christ, after first leaving all things, means in the New Testament a movement toward the Messiah, at once unconditional and regardless of consequences, an inchoate act of presence where he is, developing, when and as he wills, into an imitation of him. The saying about bearing one's cross is an extreme case of this; but even here the word used to describe it is "following" and not "imitation". Whenever following implies imitation, it is always in respect of the way divine love abased itself. The word occurs once in the synoptics in connection with the strife for the first places, once in John in connection with the washing of the feet; in addition, there is the use of the word "example" in the final discourses, referring to the giving up of life. Yet however urgently the commandment of love is expressed, how undemanding, in fact, what is commanded! It is something far less than heroic, something plain and obvious, though the persons addressed have the status of "followers", which means of participators in the mystery of the hypostatic union. For what has to be done is already performed, as to its inner substance, in the Head.

What the Head does is certainly the unimaginably greatest thing

that a man has ever done. Yet it is not superhuman, but divine-human, and so all-human—not however, in the sense that all men do it or can do it, but that it represents, once and for all, what God is as distinct from man, and what he created man in order to express. “Ὑπὲρ οὐσίᾳ οὐσιώθη. Ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἡμῶν ὑπερφυῆς ἦν” (Denis). Of him we have to predicate each of these pairs of opposites: effort to obey and unquestioning obedience, real temptation and the impossibility of yielding, profound dereliction and inseparability from the Father. Here is the abyss of tragedy beyond all tragedy.

We are not required to repeat, on our part, what Christ, God and man, has done. It is enough for us to know in following him that we participate in his riches through their superabundance.

The natural virtues are acquired by effort on the natural plane. The supernatural virtues are infused through grace, which is a participation in the nature of God. They are the form in which our finite spirit becomes capable of living the divine life, which is infinite. What it is endowed with, infused with, is not just a “faculty”, but a fullness of life, from which it only has to draw in order to water the entire garden of its finitude and temporality, and so make eternal growths come forth. Thus the soul in grace does not live in a state of indigence advancing toward fullness, but in a state of fullness radiating out into the poverty and darkness of this world. The Lord is the light of the world, and it is given the soul to be its light together with him. All that was said about the essential constitution of the finite has become for the moment of no importance; for the just man lives by faith, that is, by the gift of eternal life. His acts are performed not as part of his striving toward perfection, but as proceeding from perfection; and not in the consciousness of the difference between what is and what ought to be, but in the clear knowledge that the divine unity of what is and what should be, that lives in him by grace, must be maintained in his life.

This is the conception that lies at the basis of the whole ethic of the gospels, of Paul and John. It means that we have not first to strive for the unity of what is and what should be, for it is already realized in God; that we have received a participation in this process, and that it

must be unquestioningly realized in us. This obligation, since it is grounded on a divine necessity, requires the most complete commitment of the whole person, the application of all his powers. The demands it makes are so pressing that, in comparison, the categorical imperative of natural ethics is but a feeble summons. Thus Paul argues in Romans 6: since we *are* already dead with Christ, we cannot, should not conduct ourselves as if we were still living as before. Thus John in his letters, when he brings out the fundamental obligation of Christians: "In this we have known the charity of God, because he has laid down his life for us, and we *ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren"; "If God has so loved us, we also *ought* to love one another"; "This commandment we have from God, that he who loves God love also his brother." This necessity arises from the gift already implanted in us by God of his own identity, and so is not just an intensification of the claims of natural ethics. The urgency of its demands is not the product of a necessity indwelling in human nature, but of something placed there by God, at a deeper level than any reality of our own. It is something that lays claim to our whole being and, by that very fact, imposes an inescapable obligation.

The natural life can only be, like eros in Plato's conception, a life of want and of attempts to satisfy it. It strives ceaselessly and insatiably to fullness of being, and its nearest approach to this is the actual effort involved. The Christian life, the life of grace, of faith and charity, is necessarily one that proceeds from fullness of being, and is, therefore, a life of thanksgiving: *eucharistia*. Enriched, beyond all hope and beyond all satisfaction of its indigence, from the abundant riches of eternal life, it can but be a continuous testimony to the gifts of grace. So it was that the psalmist lived in uninterrupted praise of God's mercy, and that Mary sang her Magnificat. So it is that the Christian, to whom eternal life has been given in faith and charity, has only to let himself be led by the current of this life so as to become himself wholly an expression of it. Consequently, in the Christian life, there are no "stages of development" in the sense of the ascetic and mystical "degrees" in the schemes of other religions. The only stages are those of the development of the life of grace in us, the ever more complete elimination of what blocks the way of grace. The Christian may, and

must, constantly connect up with the riches already at hand, laid down in advance, and the more he does so and acts accordingly, the better Christian will he be. To take an already present perfection in the natural sphere for granted, or an end already attained, in this way, would be quite absurd, the kind of thing a beginner might do who wants to play the master. But for the Christian to refuse to set out from this fullness as his starting point would be equivalent to unbelief. The apostles were constantly at pains to rid ordinary Christians of this kind of unbelief, to encourage their faith to a complete reversal of standpoint, to make them conduct their lives from a point which they had only hoped to reach by Christian living. The more thorough the change of perspective, and the more fearless the leap, the easier it becomes. And those who try to follow the two ways at once—that of faith which starts with Christ, and that of man's indigence going to the Absolute—get caught up in an inextricable tangle. There is no common measure between nature and grace, reason and faith; only the order grounded in the person of Christ: nature as the expression and servant of the supernatural. In this service it will not be found wanting.

To understand the divine life of grace in us, it is essential not to revert to the view that the infusion of the theological virtues means in some sense or other that they are acquired. Faith and love, with which hope is conjoined, are to be understood primarily as the expression of the eternal life communicated to man; as something in consequence, far beyond the possibilities of the natural intelligence and will, for they spring immediately from the inmost life of the Trinity. Faith and charity, as understood by the gospels, are inseparable in this life. Faith is the surrender of one's own views, and can be permanent only as the outcome of love and fidelity. It means preferring the divine truth before one's own truth, because God is what he is. Faith is the intellect's love for God. According to Thomas Aquinas, love is the principle of all merit (I, II, 114, 4), ultimately also of the merit of faith, of its obscurity, of the renunciation it entails. Love itself is the surrender of one's entire will and being through faith, in the conviction that God merits to be placed first in every respect and is deserving of total surrender; in a trust, too, that in its knowledge surpasses

all knowledge. And it is precisely in this infinite surrender and self-renunciation, in this absolute preference of the Thou to the I, that the life of the Trinity consists; for it is a life in which the Persons can be conceived only "relatively", that is, through one another. The Father only is, as he who generates the Son, he who surrenders and pours himself out in the Son; and the Son is, only as he who utterly surrenders himself to the Father, acknowledging himself to be the Father's glory and image; the Spirit is, only as witnessing and expressing the love between the Father and the Son, and proceeding from them. "Faith" and love are, in this sense, the core of the divine being and life, though faith, as here understood, includes all vision and knowledge, and therefore is taken in its analogous sense. Nonetheless, since eternal life, in order to be life, transcends itself to infinity, this "faith" cannot be a knowledge in any way restricted in scope; any limitation would cause this life and interchange of love to weaken and grow cold. But the supreme excellence of the eternal life does not exclude its capability of being present in various degrees. The faith and love by which man in grace lives comes from the infinity of the eternal life. If we confine ourselves to analyzing them as psychological acts, we leave out of account their inmost essence. Indeed they are psychological acts, but not acts of the old I, which "dies daily", but of that mysterious new I, which is only accessible through faith and love. The "natural" man directs his thought by the light of reason into the darkness of mystery; the Christian thinks in the light of the mystery of faith, by which he illuminates the darkness of the world.

2

At the core of created being is the tension between essence and existence, which is the basis of the category *ens commune*. On another level, though closely connected with the first, it is characterized by the tension between the universal and the particular, the abstract and the concrete. For there is no particular that is not the particularizing of a universal, the concretizing of an abstract, that cannot be subsumed under a more general category; nor, however, is there any universal

which cannot be represented in a particular. For this reason, each pole presupposes the other, and elucidates the other. What has never been met before loses its strangeness, once it can be incorporated in something already known, and the bare universal takes on coloring when we can recall a concrete example. The confusion of the mass of individual things is cleared up by their assignment to various species, from which they derive unity, nature and law, and the species themselves, in which all individuality seems to vanish, receive an identity, a history and a significance from the undeniable character of what exists here and now. Intellect and sense, knowledge of the universal and view of the particular, condition one another, for the being of the world is so constituted as to correspond to this polarity, and so to reflect the divine unity in the mutual tension and irreducibility of generic and individual unity. This is why human thought, philosophy, oscillates between two impossible ideologies, realism and nominalism. The truth lies between the two, though never finally established, just as being itself lies somewhere between the universal and the particular. Likewise human religion and mysticism may seek to dissolve individuality in the purely universal, or to escape the curse of the collective that reduces all to the same level, in order to engage itself with the purely individual; but both these attempts at evasion are held up by the reality of being and what it comprises. No individual can be, as such, universal, and no universal individual.

But here also the two are identical in God, and, in the incarnation of Christ, God is brought into the world. Christ is neither one individual among others, since he is God and so not susceptible of comparison, nor is he the norm in the sense of a universal, since he is this individual. Because he is God, he is a *Universale concretum*, a *Concretum universale*. It is for this reason that he is outside our most elementary modes of thought. He cannot, under any aspect, be classified. Neither in his particular nor in his universal aspect can he enter into comparison with any other. In philosophy it is true to say that the phoenix, an individual that in itself exhausts the species, is a contradiction, an impossibility. Theology, on the contrary, starts out from Christ who, as this individual, is universal, because embodying the absolute norm, and who, as this contingent being within history,

is the necessary being above all history and nature; he it is to whom, as Head, all things in heaven and earth must be brought back. He is indeed a man, and yet not an individual among others, since what distinguishes one man from another, the person, is in his case God. And he is, on the other hand, "the meaning of the Law", the supreme norm; yet he does not share the essential property of all secular laws and norms, that of being separable from the individual case. Consequently neither nominalism nor extreme realism is applicable to him; and it would be a mistake to imagine that, in proceeding from the abstractness of the early medieval realism to the supposed concreteness of the later nominalism, one can get closer to the essence of Christianity. The uniqueness of Christ consists in this, that God came into the world in him alone, and no process of abstraction, no reduction to universal principles is of any avail for an understanding of this unity. This is the "nominalistic" side of Christianity. At the same time, Christ is the divine Logos in the world, who is himself the measure and rule for all abstract law and every concrete event. This is the "realistic", "Platonist" side of Christianity, and also the "Aristotelian" side, the maintenance of the rights of sense over against pure reason. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled, of the word of life. . . ." This uniqueness of Christ, which everything in this world, both singular and general, depends on is the manifestation within creation of the uniqueness of God. God is not only one, he is the One, the Unique. Every creature has something of his uniqueness, but only in the setting of the greater dissimilarity arising from the tension between the general and the individual, which even the created spirit does not wholly escape. But in Christ the Spirit is a divine Person and, in its quality of person, is inseparable from the personal community of the Trinity. This community is not generic; it is what is most singular, but it is this precisely as community. It is an identity that wholly surpasses our imagining, as does the way in which the creaturely nonidentity between I and We is enriched beyond measure in the eternal ground wherein we are united through the uniqueness of Christ.

This uniqueness of Christ, being the uniqueness of God, in no way pertains to the world or is explicable in terms of the world, or

comprehensible to it. Yet he lets us participate in it, giving it to his body, which is also his bride, the Church. He gives it, within this body, to his members, who, marked with the signs of his uniqueness, are visible to the world, at least negatively, as what "is not of this world". The world must, therefore, hate Christians, because it hates Christ, and, hating him, hates the Father (Jn 15:18ff.). Now we cannot subsume God under any general concept, not even that of being, for this is essentially analogous, that is, its universality is not adequate to raise it in any relationship whatever above God, not even a logical one. Consequently it is impossible to infer, from the uniqueness of God, the least thing that would not be the outcome of God's free self-revelation; nor can anything that directly depends on our participation through grace in God be subsumed under any of the categories of this world. We may perhaps, for the sake of logical convenience, apply the concept of *societas perfecta* both to the Church and the state, but such an application has no validity in the ontological order. The body of Christ, its presence by grace among men, is not only on quite a different level of being from that of the state, but, by its very uniqueness, is not amenable to any subsumption in the real order.

Christian thought, therefore, is radically different from the purely natural mode of thinking, which always proceeds by way of classification. Nothing that has to do with God's supernatural working out of salvation in the world is capable of classification. Certainly each event in it points to the uniqueness of God ever anew encountering us. With each event it manifests itself more, and we are caught up further into it; but this does not mean that it becomes more familiar to us, as a subject becomes more familiar as we work at it. One can dominate a subject by mastering its general laws and grasping their application to individual cases. But from the thousands of events of the Old Testament it is impossible to construct a single a priori theory as to how God could or must have revealed himself in addition to them. We can come to know God, his works, his mind, his wisdom as revealed to us through his grace. We can learn better to understand the meaning of his present and future acts through his past ones, and the whole economy of salvation, with its teachings and prophecies, its constantly renewed applications, all the promises it contains and their

fulfillments, spurs us on toward this understanding. Yet with all this abundance of spiritual riches given to us by God, we are not entitled to deduce laws by which we could master the process of salvation and God's working. We can only understand this process in the measure we are willing to hear right to the end, and to involve ourselves wholly in the drama, insofar, therefore, as personal faith and self-giving love remain the foundation and summit of all our knowledge, for faith and love are a participation in the divine love, and the God of grace is not to be known without the God of grace. Christian knowledge, therefore, advances not so much in breadth—new truth is not attained by the application of logic—as in depth, in that faith reaches through the apparent finiteness of the words and acts which constitute revelation to the infinite abyss of the divine wisdom therein contained. Certainly this depth is itself capable of verbal expression, since it is a depth of the Word, and so theology is possible. But in theology the divine content is not expanded and explored on the level of the human mind, but rather the human mind is raised up and carried along in the mysterious dimension of God's own self-revelation.

3

The being of the world is in a state of tension between essence and existence, between the generic and the individual. But a being that is spiritual knows this is its structure, which is essentially one of movement and unrest. It is a structure that has no permanence in itself, and so is a standing proof of its contingency and creatureliness. And as a creature and a nature, the being subject to this tension is drawn in all its fibres back to the abyss from which it originated and in which its dynamism is appeased, that is, in the absolute identity of God, in the pure Being, beyond all distinction of essence and existence, in the pure One, beyond all division of generic and individual unity. From this it is easy to see how all natural religion, mysticism and philosophy must envisage our relationship with God. On the assumption that God had not revealed himself otherwise than in the constitution of

created being, creation alone would have to serve as a guide to him. Everything in it bears his trace, each essence as well as each existence, each universal as well as each particular. Each element presents itself as relevant here, and is so presented also by its counterpart. The idea that God, as Creator, has no sort of relation to what he created, and that this expresses nothing of his thought, and therefore of his being, is absurd. And yet a cleavage runs through the very heart of the creature. There is within it no hidden sphere of identity, no place where it may venture to assert its existence as necessary, its individuality as of universal application. Consequently it knows its poles only as relative, the one only through the other, only for the sake of the other, and both so involved in the relationship that, apart from it, they could not be assigned any intelligible content at all. This relativity reveals itself progressively; it increases the deeper man penetrates in thought and experience. Everything that he and the world is bears traces of God, but, in the end, it never manifests him. There is a certain similarity, but it dissolves in an ever greater dissimilarity. Everything points to God, but he is the Wholly Other, the Unknown. And he is most unknown when he transcends even the name of the Wholly Other, and becomes the Not Other (*Non aliud*). There is a *via affirmativa*, but it issues in the *via negativa*, in which we know and reverence God more profoundly, because we set aside all statements about him that do not describe him as he is. There cannot really be a third course, at all events not as a kind of synthesis of the two, in which knowledge by analogy—similarity in even greater dissimilarity—may be surpassed. It will be either the expression of the creature's continued aspirations, ever unsatisfied, or else of the fact that God has revealed himself in a degree far beyond the possibilities of nature.

Revelation, however, does not begin at the point where man might have expected it. It does not come about when he has passed through all that is relative in order to attain the absolute, when by a supreme effort he attempts to put his humanity behind himself in order to attain to some intimation of the divine. Natural mysticism and philosophy necessarily travel along this path, the way of negation and supersession of self; but it only knows the abstract opposition between relative and absolute, and can only attain the absolute in constantly

transcending all that is relative. It must travel the way of "ascent", the way of the Platonist eros, seeking, by ridding itself by "degrees", of all that confines it, to become free of all barriers and, departing in the night, like a thief, from the house of its finitude, to enter that of infinity. What characterizes all mysticism and religious philosophy outside Christianity is—with all its delight in the senses—a distinct tendency to do away with becoming, to merge all that is finite in the abyss of the infinite God, to sink all definite words and ideas into the aboriginal ground of *σῆμα*, of silence. Chinese and Indians, Greeks and Arabians, Plotinus, Eriugena and Böhme, Schelling and Rilke all agree in this. Christianity alone takes an optimistic course. The Word has become flesh. God has shown himself not on the farthest boundary of the world, but in its midst, indeed in its lowliest part. And since he prepared himself a body within the sphere of the finite, man does not draw near to him by denying all that limits him. A movement of ascent to God leaving the world behind was only justified as long as God had not descended, not revealed himself in a human body, in human words. (But that means never.) Any such attempt at ascent is not merely made less necessary, it is wholly superseded by God's descent to man. Man had, understandably enough, tried to forge a way for himself, but God shows another way. And it is not for man to try to combine the two or even to incorporate God's way into his own. There is no call for him to tax as heretical the attempt to forge a way to God. So long as no better course offers itself, one must make do with what one has; and if God does not put forth his hand, man must use his own powers to reach out to God. This is perfectly in order—or rather, would be, if God had not revealed himself from the very outset.

God's action in revealing himself makes an end of the mainly negative theology, in the sense in which the natural man must necessarily understand it. God is primarily a known God, a God who has disclosed himself, has shown who he is, and who has sent into us his Spirit, the very Spirit who searches the deep things of God and makes them known to us. We see the Son, and in him the Father, in faith now, in vision later. But faith and vision are so near each other, promise and fulfillment are so conjoined, that we already believe as if

we saw, for we love the Son, who sees the Father; and we love the brethren in the love with which the Father and Son love one another; and, in so loving, we know what God is. And the man, Christ, is not only a creature separated from the Creator by the abyss of his creatureliness. He is the begotten Son of the Father, and his created nature is drawn into the eternal act of generation. This nature is indeed entirely the expression and property of his divine Person, so that everything that pertains to it is God's word and seal. "What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, of the word of life . . ." In Christ, but in him only, and yet, through him, in all that he includes in his sphere of grace; in Christ, in the Church, in the world, which, in its entirety, he came to redeem, created being, with its inner tensions, is made to speak of eternal life. The inaccessible summit of "absolute being" thaws, and from it streams forth the water of a life that is infinite. This life chooses as its vessel the life of the creature who, through the grace of the incarnation, is made capable of containing it. The relativity which belongs to the essence of created life no longer points only momentarily to God, and then becomes powerless to show us the Absolute. On the contrary, in Christ the human is so completely subjected to the divine and made its vessel that it can be made a lasting expression of eternal life. Each word, movement, look and gesture of the Lord is a revelation of eternal life; but equally so is his suffering, his darkness, his dereliction, his descent into hell. All this is God making himself known to man.

Everything in the created order, with the exception of sin, is enabled, through Christ, to be an expression of God, most of all what we would think to be most remote from him: the cross, opprobrium, anguish, death. And since the eternal life has made use of the whole range of the world's tensions to reveal its still wider range, man for his part must not restrict himself to anything less in framing his idea of God. No longer may he conceive God as the transcendent apex of certain selected powers belonging to the creature; rather he must be capable now, for the first time, of really finding God in all things. In other words, he may not set aside all the potentialities of the creature so as to apprehend God as "pure act", but must see them all as the

vessel and expression of the eternal activity of the eternal life; he must envisage the absolute life of God as beyond what we are wont to distinguish in the world as "act" and "potentiality". Through the Word of God, which is Christ, the whole world, in association with his taking flesh, begins itself to be God's body and word. God remains, even in his revelation, incomprehensible, beyond all our conception; but the access to him we are granted is no longer, as in the *theologia negativa*, a banishment to what is alien, inaccessible, dark; it means our being flooded with light, excess of light. God is love, and we can know this love and live by it; but it is in itself beyond our comprehension, flowing out superabundantly, the object of our adoration. We plunge deeper into it, and it inundates us. The more we live by it, the more we are truly ourselves. It makes us humble, for besides being absolute glory, it is also absolute humility. In the abyss of divine love we are ever more profoundly united without confusion, for in God himself the three Persons celebrate, without confusion of being, the highest of unions.

4

It should now be clear how the Christian approach differs from the natural, and also in what sense it incorporates and completes the latter, instead of invalidating it. It does so not by some vague synthesis of nature and the supernatural—no synthesis of nature and God is possible—giving rise to some kind of third approach embodying the two. Ultimately there is only one synthesis in which God has established his relationship to the world, namely Christ, the incarnate Word of the Father. He is the measure of nearness and distance from God; he is the *analogia entis* in concrete form, he is the event that took place once and for all, and at the same time the norm for all that is in the world. He has truly descended, has taken man's nature from an already existing humanity; but it is in virtue of this that he alone is the standard by which God finally assesses the merit of all that pertains to man. It is through this man that God looks on each indi-

vidual and estimates his worth. God looks on him as the Head, and on the Church and the world as his body and bride.

Nature, then, is perfected by being made the vessel and expression of the divine. It gives itself over to become this expression. It lets what is most ungodly in it be gathered in by God, whose pleasure it is to make what is alien his own, to make of the alogical the Logos, to be in the becoming Being, in death superabundant life. Humility can go no further, just as the Son is God in that he has the humility to wish nothing else than to be the Word and image of the Father. Nature, then, is perfected in that it consents to give up trying to understand itself by considering its own problems of being and obligation, of universality and particularity, and instead starts from the fact of the divine life, which it is not, but which it wills to live in and to make of it its exclusive dwelling. It is perfected in that it interprets itself not by taking account of what it has by inheritance and acquisition, but on the more fundamental basis of what has been divinely infused. In the sight of God, man is one whom Christ has redeemed, who has received from him the love that is God's, and, in that love, loves his brethren. Whatever else man may be is subordinate to this definition.

This is the idea of man in the mind of God, and to it the whole of nature is ordered as the seed to the flower. It cannot be said that nature is diminished by being held to serve as a vessel for the divine. What act of the human will could be more sublime than that of divine love? What could be more sublime for the human understanding than to elicit the act of divine faith? The whole problem of finite being, seen in this context, is resolved. The tension in finite being between what it is and what it ought to be is not eliminated; the movement is not brought to a halt, but starts out afresh from a new point and under new conditions, namely from the fact of the life divinely infused; and it makes use of this fact for its purposes. Neither are human modes of thinking and argument to be rejected as no longer necessary, for the Word of God has expressed itself in human words and concepts, and human speech and thought can be used by it further to bring out all its divine riches. The reflections of Paul and John show how legitimate such a procedure is—so legitimate, in fact, that in their case it forms part of revelation. The gold of the Egyptians

was only of value when it came into the hands of the Israelites; and reason is only serviceable to faith when it takes on the form of faith. We cannot attempt to blend, in our premises, the truth of revelation and that of pure nature, and squeeze out thereby a hybrid conclusion. Everything must be drawn into the setting of faith; all natural premises must be taken in the sense of faith, and so made capable of wider application. At the same time, the content of faith will itself constantly come to include more than reason apprehends; and it is just when the logical process is correct that there is present in the conclusion something of the unknown mystery that was latent in one or both of the premises.

The content of revelation is always infinite, and infinitely overflows the finite vessel into which it is poured, however authentic the vessel. For example, the identity of what is and what ought to be, which is the form of God and is yet present also in the background of the grace given, remains God's and cannot be, as a fact finally accomplished, something of man. Though he knows himself to be a child of God, he must, on that account, strive no less hard with his human powers, not only with this identity as a starting point, but also as his aim, since it can always be intensified, always exceed present attainment. There are certain conclusions it is not permitted to him to draw from the fact of the identity accorded him. For example, he is not to rest content with the knowledge that grace is an infused gift, as though it did not also depend on him, or—a temptation often alluded to by Paul as extremely dangerous—sin, in order that grace may abound the more. Even were this true of grace, one may not do so. There are, then, certain limits drawn—in fact, many apply to beginners, but not to the “advanced”, “those fit for strong meat”—but this is not because the divine cannot insert itself in a human vessel, but because it is itself so human, and we bear the glory of God in earthen vessels. The divine gift of participation penetrates the inmost being of the creature, and so brings it to fulfillment together with all its strivings, which, without grace, would remain nugatory, since the creature's perfecting depends not on its own potentialities, but on the power of God. The infusion of the divine identity does not involve any strain or distortion of the creature's potential, for it takes place through

God's own condescension and abasement to the forms of creaturely nonidentity. Nor does participation in the divine uniqueness do violence to what is nameless, specific in the creature, since God himself, in Christ, is "Son of Man", one man, that is, among all the rest; and further, because he himself stoops down, in the eucharistic species, to matter which is nameless and formless. Nor in the positive ordinances of the loving God does he oppress us with his love, but in his lowliness he always remains infinitely above us, in his nearness he is yet distant, though known he is still the Unknown to whom the Son, dying, called out in his darkness. Thus the forms and categories of philosophy and mysticism are not simply sundered; instead they have to be judged according to whether they convey the spirit of Christianity or some other spirit. Often the disparity is great and evident. Often it is slight, and then the Christian soul can only be known through a certain barely perceptible fragrance, as for instance that of the Areopagite in Neoplatonism. In the same way, the originality of a work of art cannot be perceived through the application of general rules, nor by some accidental quality, but by the impression it gives of complete inevitability with perfect freedom, overwhelming the beholder, and making him say: it could only have been thus.

THEOLOGY AND SANCTITY

I. Unity and Division

In the whole history of Catholic theology there is hardly anything that is less noticed, yet more deserving of notice, than the fact that, since the great period of Scholasticism, there have been few theologians who were saints. We mean here by "theologian" one whose office and vocation is to expound revelation in its fullness, and therefore whose work centers on dogmatic theology. If we consider the history of theology up to the time of the great Scholastics, we are struck by the fact that the great saints, those who not only achieved an exemplary purity of life, but who also had received from God a definite mission in the Church, were, mostly, great theologians. They were "pillars of the Church", by vocation channels of her life: their own lives reproduced the fullness of the Church's teaching, and their teaching the fullness of the Church's life.

This is the reason for their enduring influence: the faithful saw in their lives an immediate expression of their teaching and a testimony to its value, and so were made fully confident in the rightness of teaching and acting. It also gave the teachers themselves the full assurance that they were not deviating from the canon of revealed truth; for the complete concept of truth, which the gospel offers us, consists precisely in this living exposition of theory in practice and of knowledge carried into action. "If you continue in my word . . . you shall know the truth" (Jn 8:32). "He that seeks the glory of him that sent me, he is true, and there is no injustice in him" (Jn 7:18). And even stronger: "He who says that he knows him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 Jn 2:4). "He that loves not knows not God, for God is charity" (1 Jn 4:8).

From the standpoint of revelation, there is simply no real truth which does not have to be incarnated in an act or in some action, so that the incarnation of Christ is the criterion of all real truth (1 Jn 2:22; 4:2), and "walking in the truth" is the way the believer possesses the

truth (2 Jn 1-4; 3 Jn 3-4, etc.). Since the Holy Spirit distributes offices in the Church according to his will, and gives to some the grace to be "teachers" (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:29), for which he imparts the gift of "knowledge in the Spirit" (1 Cor 12:8), the office of teacher will consist in proclaiming and transmitting the truth of revelation, manifested in the life of Christ, in such a way that the hearer can recognize it through his "walking in the truth" and can thus verify it. For Christ, the exemplar of the truth, who designates himself as the truth, is for us the canon of truth only in that his existence manifests his essence, which is to be the "image of God" (2 Cor 4:4). "I do always the things that please him" (Jn 8:29).

It was by virtue of this unity of knowledge and life that the great teachers of the Church were able, as was required by their special office, to be true lights and pastors of the Church. For although the pastoral office is numbered by Paul in association with that of teacher (Eph 4:11), this does not mean that all pastors must be teachers, though their office involves their sharing the work of transmitting doctrine (2 Tim 2:24, etc.). Likewise, the great teachers are not necessarily pastors, though, even if they are not bishops, they participate in the pastoral office. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, in the early centuries, the offices of teacher and of pastor (in the sense of Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12) were normally conjoined. Irenaeus, Cyprian, Athanasius, the two Cyrils, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Fulgentius, Isidore—all were bishops, not to mention the two great popes, Leo and Gregory. Among the great doctors, exceptions to this rule were the two Alexandrians, Jerome, Maximus and John of Damascus; but these representatives of the monastic and ascetical life bring out still more clearly the union of doctrine and life. The same may be said, too, of most of the bishops and teachers mentioned above, who were either monks themselves or were closely associated with monasticism and promoters of it.

In short, these pillars of the Church were complete personalities: what they taught they lived with such directness, so naively, we might say, that the subsequent separation of theology and spirituality

was quite unknown to them. It would not only be idle but contrary to the very conceptions of the Fathers to attempt to divide their works into those dealing with doctrine and those concerned with the Christian life (spirituality). It is true that they wrote works of controversy and apologetics; but these, fundamentally, do not constitute a distinct branch, but served, at the time they appeared, as a spur to the development of doctrine. When Irenaeus, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen or Augustine argue with their adversaries, they do not operate in a forecourt of theology, but in its very center. The answers they give express the fullness and depth of revelation in its central teaching. When they speak of those "outside", their attitude is the same as when they speak of those within, though to the former they may have to explain certain things that are clear enough to the latter. And when they explain the Christian life to those within, it is always and exclusively in the form of an exposition of traditional doctrine. One might perhaps allow a distinction between the commentaries and homilies of Origen, the former being more speculative and the latter more pastoral in interest; but if we look deeper, the distinction vanishes; in both, Origen is concerned with expounding the word of God, which is as much a word of life as a word of truth. One could, of course, list a number of the works—chiefly shorter ones—of the Fathers as being more practical in scope, which could be classified under the heading "spirituality"; but, just as their works of controversy are, at the same time, doctrinal and theological, so too are those which treat of the Christian life.

This notion of "theology and sanctity" is illuminatingly corroborated and, as it were, canonized by that mysterious writer who, next to Augustine, did most to form the theology of the Middle Ages, and even of modern theology, namely the Areopagite. His *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (to which the *Celestial Hierarchy* forms little more than an "ideological superstructure") is framed throughout on an a priori (which has become for us almost inconceivable) identification of hierarchical office and personal holiness. Denis was a far too superior mind for us to impute this action to a naive ignorance of the world; in any case, we have the witness of many of his letters, especially the celebrated one to Demophilus, which shows he was fully alive to the

actual defects in the Church. But Denis was of the opinion that we can only grasp the structure of the Church and make it intelligible if we start from what *ought* to be, what in fact *is*, when seen in its existence in Christ and in its direct constitution by Christ. The degrees in the hierarchy *must*, therefore, be put on an identical footing with the degrees of inner purification, illumination and unification; to understand what the episcopal office *really* is, we must think of it as embodied in one who has reached perfection, who possesses the fullness of contemplation, the highest degree of initiation into the mysteries of God. In the above-mentioned letter, Denis does not shrink from the conclusion that only one who is himself a "light of the world" can communicate what is sacred, can illuminate. We are inclined to see, in this, the Donatist error, and not to take sufficient account of the constant basic principle of his vision of the Church. Denis, in fact, is not thinking of any purely subjective perfection, but of the gospel image of perfection. And if any commentary is needed, one only has to turn to Lallemant's invective against priests and religious who, ignoring the Holy Spirit and vegetating at the lowest stages of the Christian life, are powerless to communicate the Spirit to others. Up to the time of Thomas, Denis' concept of the structure of the Church and the hierarchy was the pattern, though often after Thomas' time the clarifying distinction between *status perfectionis* and actual perfection (*S Th* II, II, 184, 4), and his sober estimate of the relations between the episcopal and religious states (185, 3-8) were bound to come in. It is through the writings of Denis that the *de jure* identification of bishop, saint and teacher of the Church was most effectively impressed on theology, and this has been received as part of the gospel tradition.

The early medieval thinkers in the West, under the aegis of Augustine, did not depart from this basic concept. Anselm, himself abbot, bishop and doctor of the Church, knew no other canon of truth than the unity of knowledge and life. The same may be said of Bede, Bernard and Peter Damian. But as theology increasingly took on a "scholastic" form, and Aristotelianism burst in like an elemental force, the naive unity hitherto accepted was gravely shaken. No one would think of

denying that the gain in clarity, insight and mastery of the entire field was enormous. More resoundingly than in the time of the Fathers, who, almost as a matter of course, achieved eminence in the schools of antiquity, was the jubilation over the *spolia Aegyptiorum* repeated. The mood which fastened on Christian thinkers was like the intoxication of victors after a battle, at the sight of booty far beyond their expectations.

The booty in this case, however, was primarily philosophical, and only indirectly theological. Philosophy began to emerge as a special discipline alongside theology, with its own concept of philosophical truth, which was perfectly correct in its own sphere, and could lay no claim to the superior content of revealed truth. *Adaequatio intellectus ad rem* [conformity of the mind to reality]: this definition envisaged, primarily, only the theoretical side of truth. The intimate connection was seen, and indeed emphasized, between the true and the good as the transcendental properties of the one being, but it was looked at more from the human standpoint, in the mutual presupposition of intellect and will (*S Th* I, 16, 4 and ad 2), than in their objective mutual inclusion, or real identity. Philosophy, as a doctrine of natural being and excluding revelation, could not know that the highest mode of interpreting that philosophical definition of truth must be a trinitarian one, corresponding to the passages on truth in St. John already cited. There was no danger of misconceiving supernatural truth, so long as philosophical concepts were used as pointers to the final truth which is supernatural and divine. These concepts, in being taken up as part of the *assumptio humanae naturae* in Christ, lost nothing of their content—just as Christ's humanity in its entirety subsisted in the Logos—but yet, through this assumption, they must be, as Scheeben says, “transfigured”, and become, like Christ's humanity, wholly a function and expression of his divine person and truth.

But the Aristotelianism of the thirteenth century did not only enlarge the basis of theology, it was itself the start of the modern sciences of nature and mind as independent disciplines, and rightly so. It gave birth to modern “secularism”, and thereby introduced new tensions and set new problems to the Christian. The great Scholastic

period of Albert, Bonaventure and Thomas was peculiarly fitted for theology to irradiate and transfigure the self-subsisting science of nature, raising it to the plane of the sacred, and so to impart to the secular sciences a real Christian ethos, one affecting the whole outlook of the scientific investigator.

But the work of transposing the concepts and methods of the physical and mental sciences, and articulating them with theology, was bound to become more and more difficult, and post-Scholastic theology rarely applied itself to the task (in their own way, Nicholas of Cusa, Leibniz and Baader did, but they were not taken up into official theology). For the most part, it confined itself to using a natural theology, antecedent to biblical theology, as a basis for a rational exposition of the latter. Moreover this was not without its dangers, especially when the philosophical propaedeutic came to be considered a fixed and unalterable basis, whose concepts, without the necessary transposition, were used as norms and criteria of the content of faith, and therefore set in judgment over it. Teachers behaved as though man knew from the outset, before he had been given revelation, knew with some sort of finality what truth, goodness, being, light, love and faith were. It was as though divine revelation on these realities had to accommodate itself to these fixed philosophical conceptual containers that admitted of no expansion. Nor was the actual method of teaching calculated to lessen the danger. On the contrary, the student was, first of all, required to familiarize himself with the concepts of philosophy and their content, before going on to their application in theology; and he needed an almost superhuman vigilance not to approach theology with preconceived concepts which needed to be "strained" to the utmost. If those established on natural grounds were to be raised to a higher plane and seen in the light of biblical revelation, that was no task for the beginner; it needed the highest degree of maturity, of genius allied with holiness. Albert, Bonaventure, Thomas, perhaps even Scotus, achieved the task. They did not allow their ultimate understanding of the truth to be disturbed by the fullness of the irruption of philosophical truth; and so the original conception of the teacher in the Church, who was by inner necessity a saint, could once again be embodied in them.

2. *The burden of the divorce between theology and sanctity*

The following epoch saw the disappearance of the "complete" theologian in the above sense, the theologian who is also a saint. In fact, spiritual men were turned away from a theology which was overlaid and overloaded with secular philosophy—with the result that alongside dogmatic theology, meaning always thereby the central science which consists in the exposition of revealed truth, there came into being a new science of the "Christian life", one derived from the mysticism of the Middle Ages and achieving independence in the *devotio moderna*. On this byway, of course, we continue to find saints. It is also true that, later, there were still teachers who were saints: John of the Cross was a doctor, not of dogmatic but of mystical theology; Canisius—certainly no theologian—was an interpreter of doctrine to ordinary people; Bellarmine a controversialist; Alphonsus a moralist. None of them centered his life, I do not say on dogma, but on dogmatic theology. This is true even of Francis de Sales who, as the founder of *spiritualité*, assured to it a recognized though never a clearly defined place among the ecclesiastical sciences.

Bremond, in his *Métaphysique des saints*, without intending it, laid his finger on this tender spot in modern theology. What would the Fathers of the Church have made of this as a title? Do the saints really need, really demand a special metaphysics all their own? And in what will this consist? In some kind of esoteric teaching about *oraison pure*, a teaching that ignores ordinary dogmatic theology or else soars far beyond it, into the empyrean heights of a sublime asceticism and mysticism? If this is so, it is hardly surprising that it gave rise to subtle differentiations of terminology, and to various controversies between a more ascetical and a more mystical approach, between Bossuet and Fénelon, Alvarez and Rodriguez, between the various representatives of a rarified *sentiment religieux*—all of which proceeded, for the most part, quite unconnected with any development in dogmatic theology. The mere fact that Bremond could write such a comprehensive *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux* without even having to mention the contemporary state of theology as the science of doctrine is one of the more alarming facts of recent Church history.

Bremond, however, did not invent that strange abstraction. He found it already in existence, and the saints themselves bear some of the responsibility. The first of these, perhaps, was the "backward" student of Scholastic philosophy and theology in Alcalá, Salamanca and Paris, whose scholastic studies left virtually no trace in his writings or on his life's work: Ignatius Loyola. The little book of the *Exercises*, which he bequeathed to his Society as the basis of its holiness, contains, it is true, at the end a brief recommendation both of the scholastic and the positive methods in theology, an indication of the equal weight to be attached to the Scholastics and the Fathers—a most valuable prescription for all his disciples; but nothing in the substance of the book is dependent, even by implication, on Scholasticism. Ignatius draws his knowledge directly from revelation, with the combination of simplicity and prudence characteristic of the saints. It is a revelation coming with the same immediacy from scripture and the Church as from the inner illumination of the Spirit, especially from that overwhelming infusion of the Spirit given at the river Cardoner. There he received such prodigious light that, at the close of his life, he confessed that all God's help, all the knowledge he had been granted throughout his life, was not to be compared with what he then experienced. Both his ironical observations on the occasion of his encounter with the Dominicans and the Inquisition, when he was virtually equated with the illuminists and Erasmians, and still more the nominal notes he left on the matter, as well as the type of holiness envisaged by the *Exercises*, make it perfectly clear that there was one point on which he would not give an inch: the inner teaching of the Holy Spirit. Though he had not the slightest intention of inaugurating a "new theology"—for which he was conscious neither of the vocation nor the ability—he fastened on the Johannine idea of the identity of knowledge and life. The *Exercises* lead up to a "choice", arising from the fullness of the contemplation of the life of the Lord, a life springing up from the fullness of the Christian idea. This is what made them the basis for the chief school of sanctity for succeeding centuries. They restored the simple Christian conception of truth, which is the unity of knowledge and action. Just as Thomas became the patron of all Christian schools of theology, of whatever

religious order, so the Ignatian *Exercises* became the practical school of holiness for all the orders.

But there was one thing Ignatius could not accomplish. He could not prevent the growing estrangement between theology and sanctity, any more than his pupils could. It is a remarkable fact and one worth noting that none of the numerous early commentators managed to transpose the special standpoint of the *Exercises* into a foundation for a system of dogmatic theology. This was due to various causes. Whether or not it was clearly enough perceived, it needed the insight of an Erich Przywara, of a Karl Rahner, of a Gaston Fessard, to extract and clarify it into a profound "theology of the *Exercises*"—though perhaps the baroque period was unfavorable to such an enterprise because of the excessive refinement and formalizing of its approach to the problems at hand, its theological rationalism, as shown by the inconclusive debate on predestination and free will. Furthermore dogmatic theology on the one hand and ascetical and mystical theology on the other were by then recognized and treated as independent and distinct subjects; and most theologians, in commenting on and teaching the *Summa* of Thomas, felt no call to reunite them. Many, indeed, were aware of something lacking; Denis Petau, Thomassin, the Maurists and other great editors attempted to restore unity by going back to the sources. Others worked at translating and furthering an understanding of the Fathers. But there was no real endeavor in the direction of a living understanding of dogmatic theology.

Among the spirituals, those many who sought for an adequate expression of their understanding of revelation, of their contemplation and love of God, found the study of philosophy and theology one long penance. This was true not only of the less intellectually gifted, such as Vianney, but of Aloysius and John of the Cross. Some simply found food for their devotion in contemplating the gospel, without reference to their other studies. Others attempted, not always successfully, to make a synthesis between what it was their particular mission to proclaim and the traditional formulas of Scholasticism; or, if they could not assimilate these in their whole range, or perhaps did not want to, they selected particular stones from the building to use as the substructure for their own personal teaching. This was how

Francis de Sales, "Theotimus", came to formulate his teaching on love, the weakness of whose first theoretical part stands out by contrast with what follows, the soul's untrammelled ascent to God. More significant still is the *Ascent to Mount Carmel*, where the flight of the dove is impeded by the clumsy Scholastic terminological armament—in fact, the dry, scarcely assimilated scholastic excerpts are John's own.

These two examples show only too clearly how matters then stood, and how the means of expression at the disposal of these two saints differed from those of Ephraem, Gregory of Nyssa or Augustine. The Fathers found straightaway the appropriate dogmatic clothing for their very personal experience; everything became objective, and all the subjective conditions, experiences, fears, strivings, the "shock" in a word, were made to serve a fuller understanding of the content of revelation, to orchestrate its great themes. Every form of spirituality, of mysticism was seen as serving a function in the Church. Like sanctity itself, they were above all tasks within the Church. It had not yet been forgotten that Paul took all the subjective charismata, and, far from rejecting them or setting them aside, resolutely freed them from the dangers of subjectivism and reorientated them by inserting them in the factual structure of the Church. It is true that, even in those times, there were certain offshoots which, if pursued, might have led to a spirituality independent of dogmatic theology—for example, Evagrius Ponticus, the Messalianers and other sects who gave undue prominence to religious experience—even the theology of Evagrius, Macarius, or of Diadochus of Photice, or of Cassian was more steeped in dogma than its counterparts among the spiritual writers of the *grand siècle*.

The teaching of the latter was not, of course, in any way in contradiction with dogmatic theology—Francis de Sales and John of the Cross are, in fact, doctors of the Church—but it is nonetheless true that it was, primarily, not a mysticism of service in the Church, but one of subjective experience, individual states. The mystical states are, of course, the objects of John of the Cross' and Teresa of Avila's descriptions; roughly speaking, the external objects are derived from the state which reveals them. In this respect, Spanish mysticism is in

strong contrast with that of the Bible: from the mysticism of the Apocalypse, where the seer, in ecstasy, is wholly oblivious of himself in his office of transmitting the revelations; from the mysticism of the patriarchs and prophets; of Mary and Joseph, Paul and Peter, where the inner graces all serve the single act of revelation. It is very different, again, from the dogmatic mysticism of Hildegard of Bingen, of Matilda, Bridget and the two Catherines, with whom it was preeminently a question of serving the Church in conveying an objective message, itself no other than an interpretation of the one revelation for contemporary needs. When the main emphasis is transposed to an inner experience, to its degrees, laws, sequences, variations, dogmatic theology is relegated to the background. A close connection with the doctrinal teachings on God, the creation and the redemption ceases to be evident; whereas, often enough, the connections, parallels and analogies with religious phenomena outside Christianity are correspondingly more frequent and prominent.

Theology and spirituality have become, as it were, each a world of its own, with hardly any point of contact, and so the saints and spiritual writers are more and more ignored by theologians. What modern treatise of theology, which adduces as its highest authority, next to the Bible, the great saints of the patristic and Scholastic ages, feels equally obliged to cite any of the three above-mentioned doctors, or to accord them equal weight, not to mention the numerous other later saints, such as John Vianney and Thérèse of Lisieux? Where theology is concerned, they hardly exist; they are left for "spirituality" to plunder. And spirituality hardly exists any longer for theology. We have seen that the modern saints themselves are not without their share of responsibility for this state of affairs. They are not taken seriously in theology because they themselves did not venture to be theologically minded.

It is all very well to devote oneself to much thinking; but not all thinking is fruitful. One may make all sorts of deductions, but not every deduction is capable of being embodied in the Christian life. *Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem. Non alta sapientes, sed humilibus consentientes* (Rom 12:3, 16). [Not to think of oneself more highly than one should, but to think with sober

judgment, not being haughty, but associating with the lowly.] The saints, intimidated by the conceptual entanglements drawn round the gospel truth, no longer dare to collaborate in the necessary work of exposition of doctrine, or think themselves qualified to do so. They leave dogma to the prosaic work of the School, and become—lyrical poets. But just as poetry has developed from an objective art interpreting reality, the conception of Greeks and Romans, to a subjective art describing inner states, the expressionistic and impressionistic art of modern times, so also have the saints come to speak a religious language which is not dogmatic. Or else they obey instructions and respond to the demands made on them, which are more and more of a subjective and psychological nature. The saints in modern times are required to describe the way in which they experienced God, and the accent is always on experience rather than on God: for the nature of God is a subject for the theological specialist. Thus we see people such as Marie de l'Incarnation (by no means inferior to the great Teresa of Avila) straining to describe their mystical states. Teresa had herself set the example, urged on, of course, by her confessors. It is a fatal path to take, and ends up in the psychological laboratory, with its experiments and statistics—in other words, discrediting an ecclesial and charismatic witness, and degrading it to the status of a private utterance, which often gives every appearance of being satisfactorily grasped by ordinary worldly methods, very often sub-Christian. Has anyone worked out from the sanctity of the Curé of Ars all that his mission implies for the theology of confession? And if more had been demanded from Thérèse of Lisieux than a pious account of her life, accommodated, moreover, to the taste of her own sisters, we might have learned even more astonishing things than she herself infiltrated throughout her pages.

Consider the doctrinal wealth drawn from the writings of the Areopagite—not without reason the most commented on of all the mystics—in comparison with that yielded by even the greatest of the moderns, John of the Cross. And then compare, if you can bring yourself to do so, the nourishment offered by a modern theological manual for a life of holiness with that contained in any patristic commentary on scripture. The impoverishment brought about by the

divorce between the two spheres is all too plain; it has sapped the vital force of the Church of today and the credibility of her preaching of eternal truth. This impoverishment is felt considerably more strongly by those who have to preach to the modern pagans than by professors in their seminary lecture rooms. It is the former who look round for some example of the conjunction of wisdom and holiness. They long to discover the living organism of the Church's doctrine, rather than a strange anatomical dissection: on the one hand, the bones without the flesh, "traditional theology"; on the other, the flesh without bones, that very pious literature that serves up a compound of asceticism, mysticism, spirituality and rhetoric, a porridge that, in the end, becomes indigestible through lack of substance. Only the two together (corresponding to the prototype of revelation in scripture) constitute the unique "form" capable of being "seen" in the light of faith by the believer, a unique testimony, invisible to the world, and a "scandal" to it.

A remedy for this state of things was sought, a few years ago, by a group of theologians who formulated what they called "kerygmatic theology". It took as its starting point two apparently certain facts: that it was impossible to repair the estrangement from life of traditional Scholasticism, and that the contemporary preaching of revealed truth imperatively called for a new theoretical basis. Its solution, then, was to set up a new, unpretentious structure, chiefly concerned with the practical needs of pastoral work, and not forgetting that a very large number of theological students are intellectually quite incapable of coping with scholastic treatises. This was carried to the point of claiming to justify the twofold approach to theology on the ground of scholastic ontology itself, by resorting to the distinction between *verum* and *bonum*: Scholasticism was held to have the *verum* as its primary object, kerygmatic theology the *bonum*, that is, the practical evaluation of revealed truth in view of the pastoral office.

This solution, carried to its conclusion, would mean perpetuating the mischievous cleavage in theology, and would be tantamount to declaring bankrupt the speculative power of reason enlightened by faith. The proposal follows the main trend of modern thought, the deepest theme of which is surely the divorce between spirit and life,

between the theoretical and practical reason, between Apollo and Dionysus, idea and existence, between its conception of the spiritual world as valuable but impotent, and of the practical world as one of power but spiritual poverty. This dualism in philosophy has prevailed at least since Kant, and, in extreme form, is found in French and German existentialism. We need not inquire here whether it expresses the weariness and decadence of our culture, or if this defeatism of thought is a symptom of the pathological state of modern Europe; Christianity, about which theology is concerned, has no need to borrow its modes and movements of thought from those current in the secular world. Its very law of life raises it above the ebb and flow of secular culture; and one sign of this should be that it draws the remedy for its ills from its own store of supernatural strength.

3. Toward a new unity

We cannot hope to recover this unity except by making a serious reassessment of the nature of theology. Once again, we mean by theology the central science of dogma, to the exclusion of every possible and justifiable preparatory study or subsidiary subject, everything in the nature of apologetics directed to the nonbeliever, all research, philological and historical, into the texts which transmit revelation to us; in other words, all the auxiliary sciences, whose direct concern is not the pure exposition of revelation from the standpoint of faith for those who believe. As a clearly defined subject, there are two aspects of dogmatic theology which call for reflection: its content and its form.

The content of dogmatic theology is revelation itself, which it aims to understand in a living faith, and to set forth by the application of reason animated and illuminated by faith and love. Dogmatic theology has its center precisely where revelation has its center, just as faith, the basic act on which rests the work of exposition, has its center at the very heart of revelation. Dogmatic theology is no mere connecting link between revelation and something else, such as human nature or reason or philosophy. Human nature and its mental faculties

are given their true center when in Christ; in him they attain their final truth, for such was the will of God, the Creator of nature, from eternity. Man, therefore, in investigating the relationship *between* nature and supernature, has no need to abandon the standpoint of faith, to set himself up as the mediator between God and the world, between revelation and reason, or to cast himself in the role of judge *over* that relationship. All that is necessary is for him to understand "the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5), and to believe him in whom "were all things created in heaven and on earth . . . all by him and in him" (Col 1:16). Christ did not leave the Father when he became man to bring all creation to fulfillment; and neither does the Christian need to leave his center in Christ in order to mediate him to the world, to understand his relation to the world, to build a bridge between revelation and nature, philosophy and theology.

The theologian has to bear the tension, so greatly heightened since the Middle Ages, between the revelation of Christ and secular science, including philosophy. But the gravity of the problem of being only really touches him at the point when it becomes transparent: as the relationship between God and the world, which in its most concrete form is that between Christ and the Church; for they are not only historical "facts", but the center of being in the process of self-realization (*actualitas essendi*).

This is what the saints are fully aware of. They never at any moment leave their center in Christ. They give themselves to their work in the world, while "praying at all times" and "doing all to the glory of God" (1 Tim 5:17; 1 Cor 10:31). When they philosophize, they do so as Christians, which means as believers, as theologians. In any case, all true philosophy outside Christianity is at bottom theology, since it lives and is kept alive by a point, a gravitational pull, external to itself, that mysterious Absolute that lies beyond the purview of merely human reason and that alone makes thought worthwhile. How much truer then must this be of the great Christian thinkers: the more intense their sense of God and his holiness, the more fervent their language. And this simply means that their thought is a function of their faith; even though, as in Anselm's case, they may for the sake

of understanding momentarily prescind from faith. Their thinking is an act that is ultimately performed in the service of their faith, of Christ's revelation, which is its norm and guiding principle.

A Christian thinker, when he truly thinks in theological terms, does not merely exercise himself in uncommitted disputation; he can let the value of his thought be measured by the revelation of Christ. Anything that really contributes to the elucidation of revelation, to bringing out its relevancy more forcefully in any way will not only be correct, but useful—true thought, in the deepest sense. Whatever leads away from the center of revelation, however logical the process, and draws attention to peripheral matters, or serves only human curiosity or vanity (and nothing is more vain than the human mind in its thinking) is part of the “knowledge that puffs up” (1 Cor 8:1). However correct logically, it is hollow and vain, nothing but wind. *Vanitas* is a theological category which may comprise any secular value, even those of the good and true in a secular sense, if the value is not directed on and informed by the supernatural values of faith and love.

True theology, the theology of the saints, with the central doctrines of revelation always in view, inquires, in a spirit of obedience and reverence, what processes of human thought, what modes of approach are best fitted to bring out the meaning of what has been revealed. That meaning does not involve teaching anything occult or abstruse, but bringing men and their whole existence, intellectual as well as spiritual, into closer relation with God. Any intellectual procedure that does not serve this purpose is assuredly not an interpretation of revelation, but one that bypasses its true meaning and, therefore, an act of disobedience. Theology possesses in the form of revelation itself the unmistakable pattern for its own structure. Whatever is of substantial importance in revelation must receive corresponding prominence in theology. But what is only peripheral and is alluded to, as it were, merely in passing in revelation should only be treated incidentally in theology. In other words, the proportions of revelation should be those of theology. If it is to be a prolongation of the message of revelation, then the prolongation must be organically linked with its starting point, the central teaching

of revelation; it should extend equally on all sides, and in that way respect the detailed structure of revelation, through a delicate sense of all its nuances.

As an example, let us consider the central point of revelation, namely the Trinity, from which all the rest proceeds, and to which all returns. The task of the first centuries of theology was to develop the doctrine on its main lines, and to protect it from elementary misconceptions; this was, on the whole, achieved by the time of Chalcedon. Augustine was the first to venture to probe beyond this first stage with his doctrine of the Image. In so doing, he disclosed a vast field for investigation, the whole mystery of being, as seen in the light of the revelation of the Trinity, begun in creation and carried further in Christ and the Church. From then on, the task would be to interpret the whole history of salvation, the life of Christ, the passion, the descent into hell, the resurrection and ascension, the Church and the Christian life, all in terms of the Trinity, as manifesting it. How rich the first biblical revelation of the Trinity is in this respect, namely the account of the annunciation! There we see, in the three stages of the dialogue with the angel, Mary (the believing Sion, and therefore the type of the Church) initiated into her own particular form of service: the Lord is with you, you shall bear a son (who will be called the Son of the Most High, and will rule the house of Jacob), the Holy Ghost will overshadow you (and behold, your cousin Elizabeth also . . .). Each successive revelation of the divine mystery is occasioned by a fresh demand on Mary and her assent to it: the Trinity emerges in the context of her obedience, her virginal state, and the New Testament contains no revelation of it that falls outside this context. Mary's attitude is, indeed, one of contemplation, but of a kind that is, at its source, one conjoined with the action of her loving response; it is a contemplation which "keeps all these things in her heart", only to bring forth what she has been given and contemplated and hand them on to the world. Likewise the gospels are the fruit of contemplation, brought forth from the womb of the primitive Church, and, for this reason, they cannot give us any other image of the Trinity than the marian one, that is to say, embodied in the actual life of these persons depicted in revelation, principally of the incarnate God himself, and

explicable only in that context. This does not mean that deviations from the doctrine must not be countered by clear and distinct arguments, but that these serve merely to erect defenses and warning signs on the frontiers, while all that they can furnish in the interior is a few indications of a quite formal nature, within which, as a framework, the living experience of faith has to work out its own interpretation of itself. This experience is related primarily to what is revealed supernaturally rather than to revelation in nature (as is the case with Augustine's treatment in the second part of the *De Trinitate*), and so has less to do with an image than with the revelation of the archetype itself. It is quite possible that the image can be significant for the understanding of revelation, but more important is what it stands for.

An interpretation along these lines could have led to a specifically Christian doctrine of reality, to an explanation of existence and history in the light of revelation. This implies two things: a philosophical approach by way of ascent, leading to an understanding of the ultimate realities of the world and of being itself, by relating them to the God of revelation; and a theological approach by way of descent, bringing this same God down to the being of the world and its history. The material of this elucidation is the understanding of being, but of being as experienced by actual living according to Christ and the Church. This understanding is given by the Holy Spirit not to the isolated individual, but to the Church, in whose experience the individual has but a share, most of all the saint, who lets his own private experience be governed and molded entirely by that of the Church.

The explanation of man's being and history in the light of christology should be developed dogmatically in relation to the teaching of the Church about each of the Persons of the Trinity. First, it must be developed into a doctrine about the creation, with reference to God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, a doctrine built on a christological foundation, on the relationship of Christ to the Father—in which we have been offered a participation after his death and resurrection. What the prayer of the saints, their experience of God in the world, might have to contribute to this doctrine has hardly begun to be explored.

But it is the Church's teaching on the second Person, christology, that stands to gain from what the saints experienced. In fact, however, christology also has remained practically static within the formal setting of Chalcedon; its further growth as a result of the total experience of the Church's faith is still awaited. We can see this if we consider the state of what might be called "passiology" (why have we no word for it?). The inner experiences of the Redeemer in his passion, which should constitute the center of the doctrine of redemption, are, admittedly, not to be understood by a comparison with purely human sufferings and states—unless we are to remain content with a purely external, legalistic doctrine of redemption. The sufferings of the Lord being, in virtue of the hypostatic union, *sui generis*, they were not just an intensification of common human sufferings. They were unique, since it was the only Son of the Father who suffered them; and so, in their essence, they have to be explained on trinitarian lines. The New Testament gives us very little that can serve to introduce us to the mysterious inner world of the passion. There is, however, more in the Old Testament, but it has never been made sufficient use of. Above all, there are the graces of participation in the passion given to the Church, the experiences of the saints, which are quite inexplicable except as a participation in Christ's states. These experiences constitute the vast, limitless field of the "dark nights", which, as described by those who underwent them, are so strikingly similar and yet offer such a variety of individual aspects. To my knowledge, no theology has seriously undertaken the task of seeing them as a whole and evaluating them from the point of view of dogma (how else could it be done?). Not even writers on mysticism have assembled and subjected them to critical scrutiny. It may be objected that phenomena of this sort, when genuine, are unfitted for the common gaze; that the important thing about them is their effect, that it is of their nature to be hidden and inaccessible, for example in monasteries and convents. But this would be a strange notion of the catholicity of the redemption, as strange as to say that the fact that, on the Mount of Olives, the official representatives of the Church (including John) went to sleep, justifies, nay requires this neglect. Why should we persist in ignoring the detail of these sufferings,

making not the least attempt to use, for a better understanding of the faith, these experiences so valuable for the Church? The important thing is not the "mystical phenomenon", nor even solely the co-redemptive function given as a grace, but the fact that something of the passion is, through the grace of the Head, constantly being made present in the body, and that the body needs to understand what is happening there by relating it to the Head as its source and end.

Something of the sort also holds good of the third article of the Church's teaching. The Holy Ghost is Christ present and acting in the heart of the Church and of each believer. The whole of ethics, all the holiness of the Church and the person, the whole of liturgy and contemplation find, in this article, their doctrinal setting, and need to be developed accordingly, in the light of all that the Church has experienced, which means, primarily, the experience of the saints. Much would appear in a very different light were we to apply our reflections to the archetypal function of the saints rather than to the figure presented by the average sinner, for example in the understanding of what a sacrament is and of what its reception means. What does it mean for a saint, when he communicates? He should know, and be able to teach us. What is the significance of a Christian life as a witness to Christ? What is its theoretical structure, and how is it realized in practice? The whole of apologetics also, as understood scripturally, comes within this third article. It was her Founder's will that the Church should prove herself to the world as the true Church through certain definite qualities. What are they, in the eyes of Christ, and what are they not? It is quite clear that the central point of Christ's apologetic, and equally of that of the apostles, is holiness. The Church commends herself to men through Christian love: "By this shall all men know". Whatever else we count as basic properties of the Church belongs to her structure, but has less appeal to the sincere inquirer. It is only when the Church is seen as the Church of saints that her image is irresistible. "If only all of you were like these . . ." is what the world says. Against the evidence of Christian love there is no valid objection, certainly not that derived from humanism, for agape is essentially different from this.

These considerations are of general application, and not only to

those outside the Church, for the Church can only be understood by her own members in her true nature, when viewed in the aspect of holiness. Holiness is the gift of purity made her by the Bridegroom through the cleansing waters of the cross and baptism, a purity "without spot or wrinkle". If the Church were not, in her essence, marian, were she not the bride, she could never be made comprehensible in all her hierarchical offices and functions. Logically, then, she would either have to abandon her authoritative claims (as in Protestantism) and content herself with merely drawing attention to the holiness of the Head: or else proceed to a complete divorce between authority and holiness, which would be still more incomprehensible. Admittedly the coincidence of these two spheres, as presented by Denis the Areopagite in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, remains an unattainable ideal; but it is only in view of this ideal that everything becomes meaningful and tolerable. It is, certainly, not enough to say that the hierarchical functions and the *opus operatum* are there on account of the inevitable sinfulness of the Church. This is true enough, but their presence does not mean the sanctioning of sin; it is the presence of the cross and the redemption. It is, therefore, only in function of the cross, and so of holiness, that the institutional side of the Church can be rightly interpreted.

4. *Bride and Bridegroom*

What all this amounts to is that theology in the Church proceeds always as a continuous dialogue between Bridegroom and bride (of whom Mary is the prototype). The Bridegroom gives and the bride receives; and only in this acceptance of faith can the miracle of the pouring forth of the Word, which is both sower and seed, be accomplished. In this respect, Bultmann and the form-historical method are perfectly right. With revelation there is no such thing as an objective, uncommitted, scientific "objectivity", but only a personal encounter of Word and faith, Christ and Church, in the mystery of the Cantic of Canticles. When she understands, then is the Church holy; and, insofar as she is holy, she understands. This law comprises both

hierarchy and laity, each in its own mode. The hierarchy itself has its basis in the marian heart of the Church.

No one in recent years has had such a profound understanding of this law of theology, and applied it so thoroughly, as M. J. Scheeben, for whom everything, even what is most formal, is related to the structure of the *Connubium*. At the center of his theology is the God-man with the two natures, whose union he interprets, with the Greek Fathers, as the marriage of God with mankind in Mary's bridal chamber. The "personal" aspect is prominent in the relation of the Holy Spirit's overshadowing to the bridal act of faith of the virgin; the "physical" aspect, in her real motherhood and its fruit, the hypostatic union. For this reason, the patristic analogy for the latter, namely the relation of soul and body, in Aristotelian terms that of form and matter, is interpreted from the standpoint of the *Connubium*, which gives the whole Thomistic philosophy a theological aspect, or, in Scheeben's words, transforms it in the light of theology. The whole structure of the world is, also, seen to derive from a relation of love, a nuptial relation. Scheeben consistently applies his basic theme all through theology. He makes it the foundation of the formal relationships of the natural and the supernatural, of reason and faith, and also of the process of justification, of the nature and workings of actual and habitual grace, and, naturally, of the theology of the life of Christ, of the relations between Christ and the Church, of the eucharist and all the sacraments, even of scripture and inspiration. Everything is, for him, a revelation of the love of the Trinity, the *theios eros*.

Consequently it is not surprising that Scheeben, both in *The Mysteries of Christianity* and in his dogmatic theology, puts the greatest emphasis on the action of the Holy Spirit in purifying and enlightening, where the work of the theologian is concerned. He quotes Paul in this connection: *Animalis homo non percipit quae sunt Spiritus Dei* [the purely natural man does not grasp what belongs to the Spirit of God]. He considers the moral disposition, purity of heart and humility, to be still more important.

The Holy Spirit anoints with his light the spiritual eye, and so imparts a moral receptivity enabling us to attain a fuller and purer

comprehension of the content of faith; and so our knowledge only comes to full strength and life through the *realizing* of the supernatural life flowing out within us from the Spirit.

This alone is what places us "in the most inward communication" with the realities of faith, "sets before our inward eye a living image of them, makes us taste and feel them, and endows them with an affinity and intimacy with us". The action of the Holy Spirit in theology sets the final seal on the character of supernatural holiness that befits it in virtue of its source, its object and its end, which is why the older theologians called theology, in an absolute sense, "*doctrina sacra*". Scheeben also considered this character of holiness to be communicated to it by the Church, since she watches over the course theology takes much more closely than over other disciplines. Theology, therefore, participates in a special manner in the bridal holiness of the Church.

Theology, as dialogue between bride and Bridegroom in the unity and communication of the Spirit, continually brings to light new modes of union and interpenetration.

It is, in the first place, contemplation of the Bridegroom by the bride, and this becomes more objective, profound and comprehensive, the more light and grace are imparted by the Bridegroom to the bride. In his light she sees his light, and therein "beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, is transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). The purpose of contemplation is to cause the life of the bride to be transformed: glory is the splendor of holiness, which is not only mirrored in the bride, but takes her up into the "metamorphosis". This does not mean that the bride should set about contemplating in herself the glory of the Bridegroom, but that what he imparts to her is of the same nature as himself, something of the christological order. To this belong all higher graces of vision and knowledge. They are participations in the Son's own vision and knowing, and range from the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the strictly mystical charismata and experiences of God. Here, too, belong the graces manifest in the life of saints, which, according to Paul, are themselves charismata, and so functions of the

mystical body, functions we have already seen to be not without profound theological significance. For the saints are not given to us to admire for their heroic powers, but that we should be enlightened by them on the inner reality of Christ, both for our better understanding of the faith and for our living thereby in charity. As Martin Buber says: "The lives of such men need a theological commentary; their own words are a contribution to this, but a very fragmentary one", and its completion is reserved to us. The life of the saints is theology in practice. Whether they have said, or could have said, much or little in the way of interpretation hardly matters; but the beholder, when it is a matter of specified missions, must always presuppose that there is more to be seen than an example, however striking, of something already known.

The example of Garrigou-Lagrange might well be followed in his confronting the theology of Thomas with the mystical experience of John of the Cross, carefully assessing both from a theological standpoint, making them elucidate and complete each other. Whether or not we agree with all his conclusions, his initiative and method are certainly to be commended. Though objective revelation was concluded with the death of the last apostle, it does not follow that, in the Church of saints, nothing further happens that touches on revelation. After all, the miracles of absolution and the consecration are continually repeated, and they bring about, again and again, a new presence of the events of Good Friday and Easter within the Church. Why should it not be the same with the constant repetition of the theological existence of the Lord in the life of his faithful and saints?

The life common to Christ and the Church is the context of a living and realized theology, in the sense of actual life poised between perdition and redemption, sinfulness and sanctity. The existence of sin within the field of force of grace, the impact, here and now, between despairing obduracy and crucified love, these, and not a colorless and static world of philosophy, are the matter of theology. This is why it cannot be expressed *solely* in the sleek and passionless form of the treatise, but demands movement, sharp debate (*quaestio disputata*), the virile language of deep and powerful emotion — the sort

of language used by Augustine, Richard or Gerhoh, Bonaventure, Pascal or Kierkegaard—a dialectic pushed to the limit in order to rouse and inflame.

Theology speaks of an event so unique, so extraordinary that it is never permissible to abstract from it—as Husserl does, for instance, methodically bracketing [*ausklammert*] all that is factual. There is always a tendency in human thought—and theology is no exception—to bracket the concrete and forget it. We are prone to look on historical revelation as a past event, as presupposed, and not as something always happening, to be listened to and obeyed; and it is this that becomes the matter of theological reflection.

The saints have always been on guard against such an attitude, and immersed themselves in the actual circumstances of the events of revelation. They desired to be present, when and where each thing happened. With Mary they sit at the feet of Jesus, hearing from his own mouth the words of revelation. They want to know what the Lord says to them, and nothing else. They do not want to stop listening, not for a single moment, to what is being revealed, as though the content of revelation were an event long since concluded, over and done with, something there to be examined and probed like any other object of science. Their dealings are with God and him exclusively. Everything, even what they know already, they wish to hear from him, as if they had never heard it before. They wish to have the world explained anew, interpreted afresh, in the light of revelation. They wish to contemplate nature with no other eyes than those of Christ. They have no desire to know God as simply *ens a se*, but solely as the Father of Christ; the Spirit, too, not as an abstract world of universal laws and prescriptions, but as the Spirit of the tongues of fire, the Spirit who breathes where he wills. They are almost fanatically exclusivists, for they see this approach as the surest way to the universality and catholicity of the truth. They are not perturbed about how to reconcile the supernatural and the natural orders, faith and reason, the secular and the ecclesiastical spheres, for they know that those whose standpoint is firmly fixed in Christ are relieved of concern for these, though not of the practical duties that follow, of

concern, that is, for the unity in question, but not of the mission to the world that this unity involves. The discharge of their Christian vocation, even if it be that of thinker and theologian, does not require them to abandon their standpoint in Christ. Christ himself is God's emissary to the world, and he, likewise, sends them, with the promise to be with them all days, even to the end of the world. Even in accommodating themselves to the various languages of the world, they do not do so smoothly, like diplomats, but on the strength of the pentecostal miracle, which enables the unchanging miracle to be conveyed in any system of thought or conceptual idiom.

In saying that their constant aim is to steep themselves in the stream of life ever issuing from the mouth of the eternal Word, we have tacitly indicated the form of theology. Their one desire is to be receptive, men of prayer in other words. Their theology is essentially an act of adoration and prayer. This is the tacit presupposition of any systematic theology, the air that courses through the systems, the thought-form out of which it is born and in which it develops. Christian dogmatics must express the fact that one whose thinking is dictated by faith is in a constant relationship of prayer with its object. One has only to read Anselm: "I cannot seek you, if you do not teach me how, nor find if you do not show yourself". In prayer he draws closer to the mystery; in prayer he embarks on his most abstract reasoning on God and his attributes; prayer guides him as he embodies his experiment in thought, as he momentarily and methodically sets aside and breaks off the act of faith, in order to release the whole force of the *rationes necessariae*. In prayer he receives the supernatural revelation of God in Christ, and so comes to see that God's natural revelation in creation and man's reason is also revelation in the true sense, and that it must be approached in the same spirit as the historical revelation itself—on one's knees. Anselm does not distinguish between the natural and the supernatural, knowledge and faith, as between the profane and the sacred; for he learned by faith that reason too was created for the sake of faith, nature for the sake of grace, and that both form, by their interconnection, a single revelation of the incomprehensible love of the Trinity. Prayer is the *realistic* attitude in which the mystery must be approached: obedient faith, the "presuppositionless",

is the attitude where theology is concerned, because it corresponds to the *tabula rasa* of love, in which the heart awaits all and anticipates nothing. This attitude, which is that of prayer, is never superseded or outdistanced by the attitude demanded by knowledge.

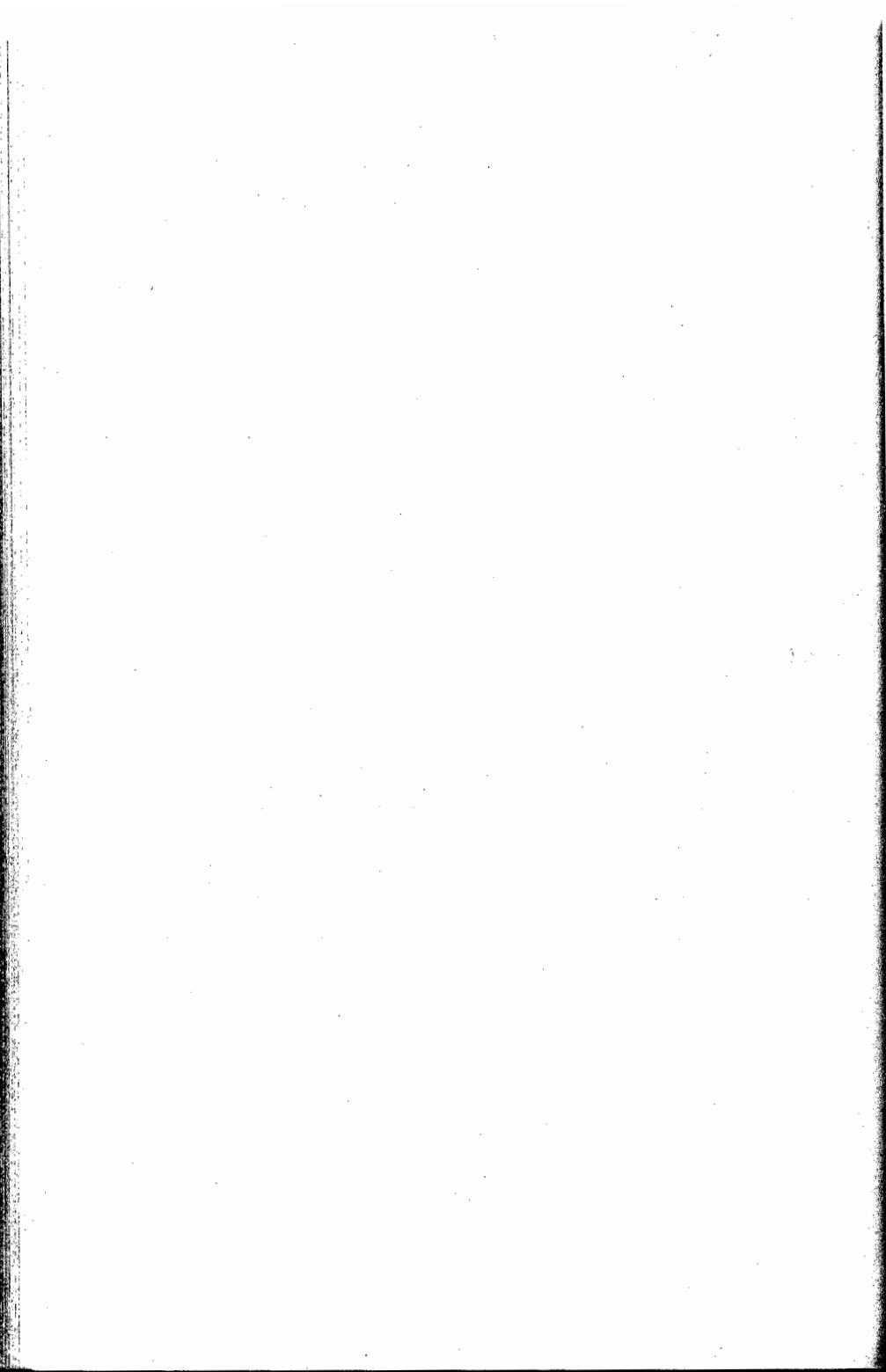
Knowledge must never be separated from the attitude of prayer with which it began. It can no more do so than gnosis could outstrip faith, and indeed it is an inner form of faith: "Faith that seeks understanding". "Seeking" here is a radical, indwelling property of faith which, deprived of it, would cease to be faith. Even when found, God is still he who is sought ("*ut inventus quaeratur, immensus est*") [once found, let God yet be sought for he is limitless]: Augustine, *In Joan* tr. 63, 1), and faith fulfilled is still praying, asking, adoring faith. There is no such thing as a theological investigation that does not breathe the atmosphere of "seeking in prayer". It is the sign by which the saint comes to know whether this or that form of the truth concerns him, and when to find the air in which he can breathe and flourish. Prayerful theology does not mean "affective theology" as opposed to theology properly so called, and strictly scientific. The antithesis is merely superficial, and invalidated by the exact, and very often abstract studies of Anselm and Albert, not to mention Thomas. Theology must always be conducted with rigorous precision. But it must also correspond at all points with its object, itself unique among objects of knowledge; and conform to its special content and method. This means that, judged by the standard of the purely natural sciences, the methodologies most comfortable to their object will have a kind of amateurish flavor. Augustine hardly spoke dispassionately in the *Confessions* and in the *Enarrationes*; but he was no less a theologian. Or did scientific theology only begin with Peter Lombard? Yet none dealt more adequately with matters of theology than Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen in his homilies, Gregory of Nazianzen and the Areopagite, the master whose works are so full of the spirit of awe and wonder. Who would be so bold as to say of any of the Fathers that his works are "full of unction" in the modern sense? In those days, men were quite clear as to how theology should be written: it should reflect both the unity of faith and knowledge and an attitude of objectivity allied with one of reverence and awe.

Theology was, when pursued by men of sanctity, a theology at prayer; which is why its fruitfulness for prayer, its power to foster prayer, is so undeniable.

As time went on, theology at prayer was superseded by theology at the desk, and this brought about the cleavage now under discussion. "Scientific" theology became more and more divorced from prayer, and so lost the accent and tone with which one should speak of what is holy, while "affective" theology, as it became increasingly empty, often degenerated into unctious, platitudinous piety. It was in this way responsible for the parallel decline in Christian art, which threatens to disintegrate into a "modern" realism devoid of awe and reverence, and on the other hand into a romanticism remote from reality.

There is no question of turning back the wheel of history, and proposing a renaissance of patristic theology at the expense of Scholasticism. The progress wrought by Scholasticism is obvious. Even so, it is of the very essence of tradition, and so of theology, that its progress depends on a deeper, bolder exploration of the sources, not only of the very young sources of scripture, whose theological exploration is always in its initial stages, as we feel now more than ever, but of the living spring of patristic theology, whose imposing structure and inexhaustible riches are surely a gift of providence to succeeding generations. There are any number of theses deserving of development which the Fathers initiated, and which, subsequently, as theology became systematized, were held unsuitable, unimportant, and so left in abeyance, a process of exclusion carried further, and with rapidity, in Scholasticism from the late Middle Ages to the present. What a wealth of material is to be found in Thomas, what a variety of approaches and aspects he suggests, how numerous the hints and promptings scattered at random through his works, compared with the dry bones of a modern textbook! It is true these were written for learners, but, after all, the great Scholastics had pupils, even beginners in view, and had to make everything as clear, simple and incontrovertible as possible. In any case, must Catholic theology always remain at the textbook level? Surely it may look sometimes

beyond the *haplousteroi*, the vulgar (which, in the sense of the Fathers, are not the uneducated, but those content with a cursory acquaintance with the faith), and enter on the depths of divine revelation, speaking, under Paul's guidance, "wisdom among the perfect", "the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory" (1 Cor 2:6-7).



SPIRITUALITY

It is of the essence of God's word to be sown and developed in the field which is the heart of man, and only in the fleeting instant of its acceptance is it grasped as an objective entity; or rather, on further reflection, even this is impossible, since the act of faith in the divine word is itself an indispensable condition for it to be perceived in its objective reality. There is no neutral standpoint outside the encounter between bride and Bridegroom, no objective standpoint, that is, from which it is possible to survey and assess the mystery of the revelation in which both are involved (the Bridegroom as freely imparting it, the bride as responding). The only question, then, is: Who responds, whose act of faith prepares the development of an understanding of revelation, a dogmatic theology in the widest sense? The answer must be conditioned from the outset by the fact that the bride is, primarily, the Church, the mother of all believers and prior to them, not the resultant of a number of individuals taken together. This is true of the Church even though she is visibly manifest only in her members, were they no more than "two or three" gathered together in the name of the Lord.

Accordingly if spirituality is the subjective aspect of dogmatic theology, the word of God as received by the bride and developing within her, then spirituality must necessarily exhibit an analogous form: that is, it must be an absolute unity, inasmuch as the subject is the Church herself, the individual being a subject only by participation in the Church; and it must also be manifold inasmuch as the Church is actually existing, is always a *universale in rebus*, that is, *in personis*. The unity of this analogy only becomes apparent to the spiritual doctrine of the Fathers and the Middle Ages in the marian mystery, for Mary as bride constitutes a third element, mediating between the *virgo ecclesia* and the *virgo anima*: as that of an individual, on the plane of the *anima*, and yet, through her privileged place in the economy of salvation, she is the "subjective model" and the ground of the fruitfulness of the Church as an a priori reality, insofar as the Church is distinct from her Founder, Christ, with a life of her own.

Thus, the unity of the bride is not an abstract idea, but is the unity of an individual subject; and so it is clear that "marian spirituality" is not on a plane with other spiritualities in the Church. For if it is truly marian, and not just a special devotion to Mary according to individual inclination, this spirituality is what makes the objective teaching of the Church come alive in the individual, and, at the same time, it frees the individual from his limitations by making him realize in practice the full wealth of the Church's teaching. This is what is involved in the character of the Church as bride, as taught in her tradition, explicitly from the time of Origen's commentary on the Canticle, and systematized in the medieval commentators, for instance William of St. Thierry. The awareness of this is what prevented the whole question of Christian spirituality from being confined to the fruitless enquiry as to whether it is one or many. Every individual spirituality is, while not ceasing to be individual, at the same time, in a real sense, the whole of spirituality (of course, only in the bridal function, that of responding to revelation, not in the creative function of the Bridegroom). Consequently each particular element has a qualified participation in the whole. It is not only a part, as a limb is part of the body with a specialized function (Paul's image falls short at this point), but is also a special form of the totality, as, for instance, each monad (if such there be) mirrors in itself the totality of all monads, indeed is an integrating and integrated stage of the totality itself.

This brings out the full meaning of spirituality. *On the one hand*, there exists a uniform *theologia spiritualis*, consisting in the Church's objective teaching on how revelation is to be realized in practice, in the life of faith, hope and charity. And since such a life has its own laws and degrees, it follows that at least its basic features and structures form part of dogmatic theology. It is the Holy Spirit who, poured forth into our hearts, impresses on them the truth of the Son; and, therefore, this *theologia spiritualis* comes under the article: "*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum . . . vivificantem*". It is the same Spirit who conducts the believer from the exterior, catechism stage to an inner understanding of the "deep things of God", to the "wisdom of God in a mystery" (1 Cor 2:7); and so this same theology is simply the Church's dogmatic

theology at its profoundest level, that of mystery. It is what was known as *theologia mystica* by the Fathers and even by the medievals up to the twelfth century. It was only when the Spanish writers put much greater emphasis on the subjective experiencing of the mysteries that the word *mysticus* came to take on its modern meaning, and then, in order to comprise the whole of man's subjective relationship to Christian truth, it had to be supplemented by the idea of *askesis*. Consequently *theologia spiritualis*, by a rather doubtful process of simplification, came to be known, particularly in the nineteenth century, as ascetical-mystical theology, in which asceticism denoted the active work of the individual, and mysticism his increasingly passive experience of divine things. As a result of this pragmatic, psychological approach, the content of revelation was transposed into a subjective framework, and so the idea of the Word as Bridegroom, always present in the old *theologia spiritualis* or *mystica*, was almost completely lost. This produced a fatal cleavage between a "dogmatic theology" divorced from the subject and turned in on itself, and the psychological subject standing opposed to it; and, since there was no center in which they could meet, the separation persisted.

The theology of the Fathers, and that of the Middle Ages, was *doctrina sacra*, both in its object and in its form: it retained both the spiritual dimension of the objective mystery and of the Holy Spirit's initiation not merely in general as a vague atmosphere ("unction"), but at every stage of thought, in the work, for instance, of Augustine, Anselm, William of Auvergne, and Bonaventure. Chenu and Hayen have attempted to bring out the fact that this is also, fundamentally, the case with Thomas, though his main object was to apply all the techniques of reasoning to establish theology, in the face of the exact sciences then emerging, as itself a science, and not only a spiritual "wisdom". But those who could no longer discern the spiritual medium always present in Thomas as the atmosphere presupposed by his work, and who were, moreover, infected by the modern scientific attitude, used all their endeavors to make theology conform to the ideals of modern science, and so were bound to bring about the cleavage already alluded to: dogmatic theology on the one hand, on the other a spirituality of the empirical subject; and this confirmed the

parallel process of *theologia moralis* emancipating itself from dogmatic theology. The problem, we must be quite clear, by no means consists in the inevitable and progressive relative independence of the various disciplines with the advance of theological study; if this were the case, the synthetic standpoint could be easily regained at any moment. What impedes the reintegration of dogmatic and spiritual theology so disastrously is the loss of the objective spiritual medium of which the old theology was so conscious as it proceeded in its development. Certainly the Fathers had at their disposal all the rational methods of distinguishing and defining for the clarification of concepts; they were used in the fierce controversies with heretics, both by individual theologians and by councils. But the crucial point is that these methods were not the determining factor in the construction of their theology. Even polemical works such as Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*, Athanasius' *Contra Arianos*, Hilary's *De Trinitate*, Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* were embedded in a spiritual, sapiential setting which became more and more pronounced as the decisive element.

It may well be harder in our day, when we have come to set so much store by logical procedure, to bring out this spiritual dimension clearly enough in theology. Yet it is of the utmost importance to see that what is lacking is not just a piece of material that can be easily incorporated into the existing structure, or else a sort of stylistic quality to be reproduced anew (though, occasionally, modern mystical and sapiential theology may be taken for the real thing, as Neogothic for genuine Gothic). The fact is that the spiritual dimension can only be recovered through the soul of man being profoundly moved as a result of his direct encounter with revealed truth, so that it is borne in upon him, once and for all, how the theologian should think and speak, and how he should not. This holds good for both the estranged disciplines, dogmatic theology and spirituality. Here, however, we are concerned with the latter; and so we would point out that the spirituality of the *grand siècle*, that of Ignatius, Teresa, John of the Cross, Pascal, Francis de Sales, Lallemant, Balthasar Alvarez, Bérulle and Condren, Fénelon and Madame Guyon, Marie de l'Incarnation and Caussade, despite their proclivity to empirical and psychological considerations, was essentially oriented (as were the medievals from

Bernard to Henry Suso) to the theological act, with all it involves, in which the "bride" responds to the call and self-giving of the "Bridegroom". This is the source whence the spirituality of the time drew its quality of implacable gravity (beneath all the baroque adornment), the remorseless exigence of the *Más* and *Indiferencia* of Ignatius, of the *Nada* of John of the Cross, the *Amour Pur* of Fénelon, the *Abandon* of Caussade, of Bérulle's doctrine of the mirroring of Christ's *états* in the life of the soul, of Condren's theory of sacrifice that verges on a theological nihilism; even of Francis de Sales (and plainer still in Jeanne de Chantal) who, under all the exuberant imagery of the "*Theotimus*", teaches how real love is stripped and purified by all kinds of pains, derelictions and hells. The main object in view with all of them was to lay open the pure, naked structure of the bridal response, and so of a crucial element of dogmatic and—whether explicitly or implicitly—of marian theology. It is the task of a future history of theology in its totality to survey and assess this whole field.

On the other side, we have a multiplicity of "spiritualities" in contrast with the uniform dogmatic and authoritative *theologia spiritualis*; and it is only at this point that those shades of difference emerge which move the present time either to enthusiasm or disquiet. The very multiplicity of historic personalities points to qualitative differences between them, and still more to God's revelation being adapted to their special characters. The existence of such differences was not, of course, strange to tradition, since it is so very clearly rooted in revelation itself, insofar as it took the form of a history gradually unfolding through the ages in a series of new encounters of the divine Spirit with different peoples, and in all kinds of religious, cultural and political situations. The "spirituality" of the desert is different from that of the promised land; that of the judges different from that of the kings, that of the prophets different again, and especially that of the sapiential books. The Old Testament itself makes it plain enough that it is not solely a matter of different standpoints from which men view an identical object; though this should not be ignored: the light of revelation grew in proportion to the growth of the people's minds and of their receptivity to what was always present there since Yahweh

began to go with Israel. Besides this change of standpoint, there was also a change in the content of what was revealed, corresponding to the changed situation, but this, in its turn, was something brought about by God and a mode of revelation. This, in fact, explains why it was that the people so often refused to conform. It is never possible to infer, as regards the biblical narrative, a future situation, in its bearing on revelation, from a present one, even when the believer is given an assurance that his faith will persist and respond to God's word, whatever surprises it may bring. The same process of change is even more pronounced in the New Testament, since there the long period of waiting, the time of the promise, condenses into a single moment, that of fulfillment. Christ, in every encounter with an individual to whom a mission of a special kind is given, introduces some element peculiar to each case. Peter and John, Paul and James, Martha and Mary, the Magdalen, Lazarus, the Samaritan woman: these are all unique cases of encounter of Christ with the individual; yet, in each, the whole, indivisible Christ communicates himself.

No small part of what the word is intended to convey comes from comparing and contrasting different aspects and standpoints. It is not merely that we gain thereby a general sense of an infinity of perspectives, but precise notions of the nature of the Church, for example, of life in the Christian community, of the irreducibility of Christian ways of life; *spiritualia spiritualibus comparantes*, we come to sense new *spiritualia*. For this reason, tradition has never taken a stand against variations as such, provided they are kept within the unity of the Church. Divergences occasioned, at times, a certain acrimony; how they could be compatible within Catholic unity was often not at first apparent, and only after some friction between their protagonists could the way be opened. Of this process, the disputes between the apostles, arising from their differing missionary standpoints, as recorded in the Acts, are in some way a prototype. Origen repeatedly observed that there must necessarily be, within the Church, a variety of schools and standpoints for the fullness of the one Logos to be brought out and expressed in human language. The Fathers, with their vigorous, perhaps even intransigent sense of the unity of the Church (anyone departing from it they considered lost), had an equally strong feeling

for the individuality of the great doctors (see Jerome, *De viris illustribus*). In fact, the East had it in greater measure than the West, and, despite the preeminent contribution of Augustine, remained the inexhaustibly fecund source of spiritual theology. Its products range from the unsystematized and varied "experiences" and diversified practices of the desert Fathers to the starkly intellectual mystical doctrine of Evagrius; the subtle teachings about inner experience of Diadochus of Photice and the homilies of Macarius; the severe, pure evangelism of Basil; and the wholly new contribution of the Areopagite writings.

The vast range of possibilities latent in the word, giving rise continually to fresh ones in the course of development, is shown by the almost infinite variety of distinct specialties appearing in the twelfth century (recently summarized by Chenu and Leclercq). It followed on a period of timid traditionalism, the early Middle Ages, which in its devotion to unity in the abstract discouraged all diversity. At the same time, the question of the different states of persons in the Church was first raised in acute form; the monastic state, the regular and secular clergy, the laity became conscious of their qualitative differences, and disputes arose from each taking a standpoint appropriate to their ecclesiastical status. It was only when Francis and Dominic took their place beside Benedict that there came into full view the mysterious force of founder-personalities, a force dimly perceived as issuing from the very core of revelation. This force was due to a special quality bestowed on them and inseparable from their personalities as supernaturally molded; it enabled them to impart a special stamp, something far deeper than a mere psychological imprint, on a spiritual "family", and so, perhaps for the first time, to exhibit what we now call a "special spirituality". It is a gift of the highest order, but it entails a grave risk, that of misinterpreting the charisma of the founder, and of focusing the mind on the image presented by the saint, instead of on Christ. This happened with the Franciscan spirituals, and the menace is always present to those who are not sufficiently on their guard. Ignatius, with his rules for thinking with the Church, warned his followers against opposing saint to saint and one way to another. The basic reason why there are different spiritualities is not because revealed truth is expressed in human terms; nor are they due primarily

to historical conditions, or to the elements superimposed on the objective doctrine by its embodiment in the experience of different individuals. All these factors have their validity in a theological view, but they are subordinate to the *free* distribution, by the Head of the Church, of his gifts and charismata (1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11-13: *Unicuique datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem—dividens singulis prout vult—ipse dedit quosdam apostolos*). [The manifestation of the Spirit is given each one to make him capable of working. He distributes his gifts to each individual as he wishes. It was he who made some men apostles.] Consequently the chief ground of the special characteristics of a spirituality is not the person who propounds it, but the mission from above, which cannot be adjudged and confined in empirical, psychological terms. For since it springs from a transcendental source, the free disposition of the Head, its end and mode of action must also be transcendent, and therefore what it contributes to the fullness of the mystical body is incapable of precise assessment. The real significance of any particular mode of spirituality is in the fact that its source and authentication is in heaven. It exists not for its own sake, but for Christ and the Church, and this implies a further element, the marian, which we shall now proceed to consider.

A spirituality centered on the attitude exemplified by Mary is, we have already seen, not just one spirituality among others. For this reason, although Mary is an individual believer and, as such, the prototype and model of all response in faith, she resolves all particular spiritualities into the one spirituality of the bride of Christ, the Church. What we learn from Mary, a lesson valid for all times, is that the response of the handmaid of the Lord to the Word working in her all his will—in such a special and unique manner—is not just one particular theme in theology. What is special in Mary's spirituality is the radical renunciation of any special spirituality other than the overshadowing of the Most High and the indwelling of the divine Word. Humanly speaking, her cooperation with God consists only in the service every mother renders to her child, inspired not by reflection on the nature of "motherhood", but simply by her perception of the child's needs. Only thus could Mary's response be made, through

grace, so complete and perfect as to become the perfect response of the bride, the Church, and the form of all the responses made by individual believers. The idea of making marian spirituality one among others is, therefore, a distortion, as dangerous as attempting to claim for one's own particular way the status of "the spirituality of the Church". This may be obscured by the concept of hyperdulia, which on a superficial level can lead to an emphasis on Mary's special status through the glorification of her personal privileges; but the real point of the "hyper" is that it transcends all that is particular in spirituality, merging devotion to Mary in the general one of loving veneration for the *Virgo-mater Ecclesia*, which as body, bride and fullness of Christ is herself a part of our faith (*credo Ecclesiam catholicam*).

There is one conclusion to be drawn from this for all missions and vocations that come within the general field of marian spirituality. It applies whether these are relatively special, in the sense of pertaining to an ecclesiastical state or office or a religious order, or of all absolutely personal vocations or individual charismata. These special spiritualities are only so in the marian and ecclesiastical sense, if they avoid all preoccupation with their particular characteristics and look, with the eyes of Mary, on the unique object, so as to find in him, from *his* law and requirements, the rule for their own conduct and response. After all, we can hardly imagine Francis, for instance, preoccupied with "Franciscanism" instead of with the poverty of Christ, in the light of which all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted to him. The great founders were, generally, unwilling to formulate in set terms the nature of the work entrusted to them; and when they did so, they observed the laws of natural and supernatural prudence, always aware of the limited influence of a single life even in the Church; nor did they attribute the place accorded them in the Church to a "spirituality" regarded as something in its own right, with its own claim to greatness. For them, their mission, office or function was not *id quod*, but a *medium in quo*, a species *im-* or *expressa*, which, quite unselfconsciously, led to an understanding of reality. To continue the analogy, we might say that the more perfect the species, the deeper and more comprehensive the understanding of the real object. For this reason, it is precisely the "great missions", those most

distinctive and striking, that most faithfully embody and reflect the very core and content of the "thing itself", the gospel of Christ, so that, between them, there subsists a real community of being (*circumincessio*), without confusion (*asynchytos*). What we find in the worldly sphere is equally true of the Church: while the "great" among the spirituals and mystics agree with one another (without recourse to "syncretism"), the "schools" attached to them disagree and quarrel. This happens because the former keep their gaze firmly and freely on the thing itself, while their followers make their "master" their primary concern, and, next to this, the mode in which he viewed the world and modeled it; and, only in the third place, the world itself thus formed. The one certain thing about Goethe is that he was no "Goethean", about Thomas that he was no Thomist. Great men communicate with one another not in their forms, but in the depth of the reality made known to them through these forms. The special and peculiar nature of their form does not cut them off from one another; it is, in fact, their medium of communication.

Undoubtedly some missions have a more strongly individual stamp than others, and so too have the spiritualities that correspond to them. For example, the tasks belonging to a particular state of life (the priesthood, the married state, the religious state) are, as such, far more general than the special tasks, say, of a founder; and some charismata are more general, some more particular. But although the bride's answer is the general form of spirituality, it is not general in the sense of being generic, but is something highly particular and definite. So that we cannot say that the less pronouncedly individual charismata and tasks are at a disadvantage over against the others, since, as we have seen, the more distinctive ones only possess the quality in order to transcend it more strikingly in pointing to the general. The anonymous character shared by the less distinctive tasks is that of the bride herself; it is Mary's desire to avoid all prominence in the presence of the divine Word alone occupying the foreground. One thing is very plain: anyone who tries to compensate an institution or way of life for any lack of special charismatic distinctiveness in its origins, by reflecting on its spirituality, and not only formulating but exaggerating it, stylizing it, making good the lacunae and, when necessary,

embroidering a bit here and there—much as one invents a foundation-myth—is not only guilty of a piece of appalling theological bad taste, productive of narrow-mindedness, sterility and the horrors of “sanctuary art”, but sins against the essential structure of the Church, and diffuses an atmosphere of sectarianism and heresy. Unfortunately this is not merely a theoretical consideration. Quite apart from certain calamitous instances, there has been a fairly widespread outbreak of “special” spiritualities. Every little association (the more exclusive, the better) tries to incubate its own particular “spirit”, around which it knocks up some kind of structure, as if engaged in creating a work of art. Love’s labor lost! Unless the Lord build the house, they that build it labor in vain. In the introduction to my book on Thérèse of Lisieux, I observed, in regard to the undue pressing of claims for canonization, that it is God who makes saints and presents them to the Church for canonization; and, though we cannot say that he has left no scope for the free exercise of the Church’s judgment, yet the Church’s liberty is essentially bound up with obedience to the Bridegroom, with looking and listening to him. Time and effort spent in pushing the merits of a particular spirituality are stolen from the service of the one thing necessary; and it is not difficult to see that the particular form becomes, unconsciously, the central concern, while the thing itself is relegated to the status of a means serving *ad maiorem gloriam* of the order, the congregation, or some other group or movement.

It will not be surprising if we extend this warning to the so-called spirituality of the ecclesiastical states. Although there is a sense in which we can speak of a spirituality of the counsels, of the married state, of the priestly state, it is in practice impossible to contrast these forms of spirituality as distinct and precisely demarcated. After all, they are not like works of art whose laws we can master, or like new clothes we can try on so as to live a Christian life in style. That sort of thing is estheticism, and quite out of place, incompatible with the real beauty of the Christian life. This trend of thinking, even when found in certain sections of a great religious order, is an infallible sign of decadence. It is, however, true to say that there seem to be moments in the history of the Church when a particular state of life becomes more conscious of its special task and function than before, and, through

reflection, frees itself from its previous dormancy. We can see this, for example, in the history of the secular clergy, particularly of parish priests, while today seems to be the time of the laity, which, having attained its majority, needs an appropriate spirituality, and one no longer governed by the standards and categories of the religious state. But much of what has been done in this line is quite superficial and trite, since the ecclesiastical states are treated as though they were separate departments of a secular association, without due attention to the profound mysteries of the ontology of the Church and the resultant circumincession of the various states. As a result, many of these attempts savor of the fruitless activism so characteristic of our time (*sicut foenum arescit*), instead of being the outcome of a genuine mission of the Holy Spirit.

One certain means for the discernment of spirits is to test the presence, open or latent, of a certain ill-feeling toward other states of life or forms of spirituality. There is no doubt that the ecclesiastical atmosphere in Europe and America is troubled by some such sentiment on the part of the laity toward the hierarchy, of the laity and the secular clergy jointly toward the religious orders, and, at the same time, of the orders and the clergy together against an "emancipated laity". Antipathies of this kind within the Church cannot serve to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12), nor does any good come of discrediting the religious state, on the ground that it was instituted by the Church in the course of history, and can well be dispensed with. Yet, precisely because the Church's structure is given from above, something mysterious and not a merely human contrivance, it can, while retaining its basic form (the hierarchy and the forms of life derived from the sacraments), be susceptible of modifications, the outcome of a living dialogue between the various states, one in which the whole Church is concerned. In this way, new forms may make their appearance, which, though rooted in tradition and in the supra-temporal nature of the Church, have a fresh, distinctive stamp, and are truly the work of the Holy Spirit. Among these we may include foundations like the Little Brothers and Sisters of Père de Foucauld, certain secular institutes and movements such as that of Abbé Pierre. We can only hope that these, and others like them, will resist the

temptation to assign themselves their own form of spirituality to be consciously cultivated, instead of desiring nothing more than a humble following of Christ in self-abnegation. Today Christianity can bring influence to bear only through what is poor, interior, hidden, simple and genuine; and this alone is enough to show how repellent and profound must be the effect produced by the purveyors of specially cultivated spiritualities.

This will suffice in the way of criticism. It should serve to establish the positive factor, which is the mystery of the marian disposition, as comprising and summing up the whole responsiveness of the bride to the Bridegroom, under the prompting of the Spirit. What is of the highest significance here is that Mary, in her office, could, being "full of grace", combine in perfect harmony states of life otherwise incompatible: virginity and motherhood, the married and the religious state, even in a real, though analogous or eminent mode, the priesthood (as coredemptrix) and the lay state. She represents the higher unity, not indeed as a superhuman being, but on our own human and Christian level. Thereby she shows conclusively how deeply involved with one another are the various states, and how irrelevant it is to set them in opposition by viewing them from a far lower level, where their incompatibility is most in evidence.

The circumincession in Mary of the different states of life and of what they involve is, of course, a participation in Christ's own transcendence of them, as God and man. But he transcends them as their creative source, possessing each of them *eminenter*, the priesthood, the religious, the married state (in the eucharistic and redemptive mystery of the one flesh). It is in this latter regard that Christ's celibacy represents in visible form the immutable order and hierarchy of the states of life, and to deny this hierarchical order (as does the modern theology of marriage, whether openly or by implication) is again a sign of a rebellious spirit. Nothing good can come of proscribing a theological tradition of the ancient Church, worked out over more than a thousand years, concerning the state of man in paradise, in the name of the "claims" of modern marriage theology. Louis Bouyer, whom no one can tax with narrowness of view, upholds against it the nobler conception, showing that Augustine's

position is not simply to be discarded as though it were due to latent Manichaeism, since even

the Greek Fathers, the most independent of Augustinian influence, have also, in their fashion, opinions quite the reverse of the idyllic conceptions of sexuality current among Catholics at the present time. . . . This solution, so reasonable and reassuring, is liable to foster certain illusions, as we see only too well nowadays.¹

Even if the position of Thomas has prevailed as the accepted theology of marriage (in this, Müller's view is correct), nevertheless the mystery is far deeper than a superficial theology of the states of life might lead us to suppose. The circumincession of the states and of their spiritualities in Jesus and Mary point back to a mystery in the original paradisaical state, whose archetypal but impenetrable² nature forbids us to deduce from it, by an arbitrary selection of isolated factors, complete spiritualities of the various states.

We must not, however, stop short with Christ. He is, indeed, wholly the Word of God and the revelation of the triune divine life, that is, of the circumincession of the three Persons in a single nature, and so of three divine "states" and "spiritualities". The coming of the Person of the Son in Jesus Christ and the visible manifestation of his relationships to the Father and the Spirit forbid us to resign ourselves, in a spirit of agnosticism, to the view that all distinction, being caught up in the identity of the divine essence, eludes us. The divine unity is one of fullness and not of a bare abstraction; we approach it (here Nicholas of Cusa and Hegel were right) by thinking together all that exists separately in the world, and so begin to be aware of the meaning and the possibility of distinctions. If, as we have shown, spiritualities in the Church have their source from above, in the qualitative richness of the world of grace, then the ultimate basis both of their unity and distinction must be in the Trinity. Here is the original and native place of the "identity of identity and nonidentity",

¹ *Woman and Man with God* (London), 56, 58.

² As though a few scraps of philosophy were all we need to be cognizant of the dialectic of this primordial state, a dialectic impenetrable to the understanding (of *natura lapsa*, even though *reparata*) which the Fathers approached with such reverence.

and it is the only point from which to interpret their reflection in the communication of missions within the mystical body. This reflection signifies that a "relative opposition" of personal standpoints is permitted and required, and these are irreducible to one another only insofar as they are absolutely "relative" to one another and (by reason of their origin) apart. Any other explanation of the divine Persons than a relational one would be inconsistent with the divine life of love. A mission, and therefore a spirituality, in the Church may be predominantly marked by the characteristics of the Father, the Son or the Spirit, but this fact must at once present itself in the form of a participation by grace in the mysteries of the personal relationships, of generation and spiration, both active and passive. Certainly we cannot construct an adequate trinitarian typology of spiritualities, since they are, in a special manner, subject to the freedom and initiative of the Spirit with his seven gifts and innumerable charismata, the means he uses to make known the fullness of the Son and the life of the Trinity.

This variety in unity is, as Adrienne von Speyr has shown in such bold terms in her commentary on the Apocalypse,³ the basic meaning of the glorious structure of the heavenly Jerusalem with its twelve gates of different but equally precious stones. They are but gates, however, and therefore ways, modes of access, to something that lies beyond. They lead, when traversed in love, to relationships, crossroads, fields, figures, a whole spiritual geometry of heaven, all the constituents of the life of love, for whose furtherance the differences were intended and designed. What will later be manifest in vision can be experienced on earth in faith animated by love, and it is love that, fundamentally, permits (though often hidden from the individual himself) an intimate communication between the different missions and functions and their spirituality. This, however, applies only to genuine spirituality, that which is given as a grace from the Lord. This gives us our best criterion of what constitutes a true ecclesiastical spirituality. It is one which has no element of arbitrary invention, is

³ *Die Apokalypse* (Einsiedeln, 1950), 720-59. See also *The Word* (New York, 1952).

wholly foreign to any separatism arising from secret feelings of animosity, and does not give itself out as "something special". This is what makes possible a real sharing and communication between spiritual ways.

To make this absolutely clear, we may recall how the great saints, when they came in contact with one another (whether in the body or only in the spirit) not only recognized and understood each other immediately, but entered into community with one another in their different missions. And in all this, the special and particularized mission of each was a means of enabling him to understand, at the deepest level, the other equally special and distinctive mission, and to participate in it. The only thing which faith animated by love finds alien and inaccessible is something itself untrue, which has no inward sphere; for it is this inward sphere which is important, not any outward resemblances there may be. A pure contemplative can enter, with no difficulty, into an intimate Christian communion with one given over to the active life; and likewise a married person with one vowed to virginity. This is possible insofar as the special characteristics of each derive from the grace of the Holy Spirit, their living source. It is at this level they can meet, and not at the level of deliberate reflection and analysis, bringing out points of resemblance or difference. No mission, and no spirituality, is capable of being defined in its living center. They all come from the infinite variety of the divine life, which always exceeds the compass of the human mind. Ultimately, then, we cannot project the geometry of heaven on to the earthly plane, or draw up a system of spirituality. Nor are we required to take our stand on what differentiates one from another in living our own special life, but, forgetting ourselves, to look together on the One who is above us all, that "we be transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18).

ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION

The history of this classical pair of concepts, when it comes to be written, will assuredly be of the most bewildering complexity; chiefly because, while here in particular, Christian tradition has absorbed much of the Greek culture, it has used the same words sometimes in the ancient Greek sense, and sometimes in a new Christian sense. It was only after a considerable time that it freed itself from the ancient order of ideas, and let itself be guided solely by revelation as to the content and mutual relations of the two concepts.

It is well to begin by distinguishing different levels of meaning, and to bear always in mind that the antithesis between action and contemplation does not belong to the deeper levels of philosophical or theological speculation; the two concepts cannot be precisely demarcated and opposed like those of *actio* and *passio*. The antithesis is, in fact, on a more superficial level, that of daily life, in which the two forms, that of external activity and that of the spiritual attitude which it, at its best, presupposes, can be clearly distinguished. On this level, action means simply external activity,¹ in fact activity restricted to meeting the needs of the present life² where the spirit has to serve external aims and purposes that will not be present in the life to come.³ Contemplation, on the other hand, is occupation⁴ with the truth for its own sake, and insofar as it is beyond time; ultimately divine truth and everything that stands in relation to it.⁵ Thus the pair of concepts are not far removed from the modern concepts of *homo faber* and *homo sapiens*, provided that we rule out all ideological value judgments and evolutionary background; and this corresponds with the different approaches of Plato and Aristotle as developed in the history of ideas, and with the sociological antithesis

¹ Exterior actio: S Th II, II, 179, 2.

² Omnia studia humanarum actionum, si ordinentur ad necessitatem praesentis vitae secundum rationem rectam, pertinent ad vitam activam: *ibid.*, ad 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 181, 4; I, II, 67, 1 ad 2; 68, 6 ad 3.

⁴ Studium: *ibid.*, II, II, 179, 2 ad 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 180, 3.

of σοφός and θάναυσος. It is well to bring out this merely external contrast, which was the starting point of ancient and medieval speculative thought, before examining it at the deeper levels, where the opposition is more doubtful.

I

The meaning given by the ancients to the two concepts and their account of the relationships involve, of necessity, a value judgment, which makes it very difficult to deal with them. The judgment takes explicit form with the subordination of action to contemplation. The purely spiritual occupations in which truth is contemplated and sought for itself alone (in the *artes liberales*) is held superior to those producing things necessary or useful to life, where man's spiritual faculties serve what is material (in the *artes serviles*); activity directed to truth for its own sake is superior to action for the sake of others, for the common good.

There is a certain danger in accepting this evaluation, since it involves two distinct things. In one aspect, it emphasizes the superiority of the activity of the spirit, which has its end in itself, against that which enslaves it to the task of satisfying earthly needs. Certainly nothing is more necessary in these days than to emphasize the former as the inalienable right and true worth of man as opposed to the despotism of the industrial process which claims the services even of the contemplative as engaged in "mental work". Josef Pieper, in a masterly study,⁶ reiterates the old truth, pointing out that regimentation of the mind would most certainly prove fatal to it.

In a logically constructed work-state there can neither be genuine philosophy—since its essence is not to be at the disposal of anyone for his purposes, and so, in this sense, free—nor any science pursued in a philosophical manner, that is, any academic culture in the original sense of the word.

⁶ *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* (New York, 1952).

The superiority of contemplation to action, in this sense, is one of the inalienable bases not only of classical culture, but of Western culture, indeed of any human culture at all.

But closely connected with this is the other aspect of the Greek view: the superiority of what is inner and personal to what is external and social, of *actio immanens* to *actio transiens*, of the act directed to what is above man, the divine and external,⁷ to that concerned with the earthly and human, even for the relief of misery and want. It is this second aspect that is echoed by Thomas when he ranks those external actions that flow from contemplation, such as teaching and preaching, higher than those "consisting wholly in external matters, such as alms-giving, hospitality, etc.";⁸ and, on the other hand, when making a somewhat forced correspondence between the love of God and contemplation, and between the love of one's neighbor and action, he makes the former more meritorious than the latter.⁹ Only, as it were, *per accidens* "can it happen that one may merit more in the works of the active life than in those of the contemplative life; for example, when, through his abundance of divine love and for the fulfillment of God's will, one endures, for God's glory, separation for a time from the sweetness of divine contemplation" to devote oneself to action. These judgments are more Hellenic in tone than Christian, and indeed the eight reasons Thomas puts forward for the superiority of contemplation to action are taken entirely from Aristotle, though he subjoins to each an example from the Bible.¹⁰ What is quite plain is that Greece provided not only the categories, but to a great extent also their interpretation and relative assessment. This is true both of Thomas and of the Fathers, and in some cases, even more explicitly of the Fathers.

With Clement and Origen the Christianization of these two concepts was comparatively successful, since the Christian "Gnostic" was represented as not one-sidedly contemplative, but—though with strong

⁷ *Vita contemplativa non proprie humana, sed superhumana*. Q. disp. de virt. card. 1.

⁸ S Th II, II, 188, 6.

⁹ Ibid., 182, 2.

¹⁰ S Th II, II, 182, 1.

emphasis on the intellectual side—as the complete Christian in whom action and contemplation are joined in harmony. On the other hand, the monastic theology, which reached its peak with Evagrius, forged a system quite inconsonant with Christianity, a super-Hellenic system in which the active life (*praktike*) served only as means and prelude to the contemplation of God in the world (*theoria physike*) and, ultimately, of God alone (*theologike*). This exercised a decisive influence on Cassian and Gregory the Great, and they and their disciples only freed themselves from it by degrees and with great trouble. It should be remembered that Augustine, Pope Gregory, even the Cappadocian Gregories, regarded contemplation as pure pleasure, and action as pure affliction—the life they had to suffer, a burden under which they labored, though always looking for respite, and still more for its final cessation. The same attitude persisted, essentially, down to Thomas who, weighted down by so constant a tradition, found it hard to restore, if only in some degree, the Christian balance. As so often with him, it was a balance between different epochs, a summing up of what had gone before with a view into what was to come. While using the ideas and language of tradition, he imperceptibly changed the emphasis, introducing new perspectives and opening the way to future changes.

The accepted formula “contemplation above action” ceased to be so rigidly interpreted with the coming of the mendicant orders, with their ideal of a life in which contemplation flowed out into action, this latter still persisting. Only the action which “*ex plenitudine contemplationis derivatur*”¹¹ is “to be preferred to simple contemplation. For, just as it is a greater thing to illuminate than merely to shine, so it is greater to communicate what is contemplated than merely to contemplate”. The Fathers had virtually apportioned the active and contemplative life between those in the secular and those in the religious life respectively; the Glossa, in fact, comments on the enumeration of the commandments with the words “*ecce vita activa*”, and on the counsel “*si vis perfectus esse . . .*” with “*ecce vita contemplativa*”.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 188, 6.

¹² *Contra retr* c. 2.

But Thomas shows that the highest form of Christian mission, the apostolate, is part of the active life, and that the apostles needed the counsels precisely for the perfection of their active work;¹³ though (showing how powerful the Greek tradition was) he concludes by saying: "One does not need to stay in the world for the sake of being exercised in the active life; for, even in the religious state, one can practice the active life as much as is needed for initiation and progress in the contemplative."

Side by side with the purely upward movement characteristic of the patristic age, room is now found for the movement of descent—hesitatingly, at first, but more and more confidently as Christian inferences came into play. The statement that "the higher reason, destined for contemplation, is related to the lower, directed to action, as husband to wife, since she has to be guided by him"¹⁴ certainly indicates superiority of the former to the latter. But perhaps we may take the image more seriously, and ask whether man must not turn to woman in order to be fruitful, must not pass through "the gate of humiliation and death" (in Claudel's words) to prove his virility? Is not the wife "the glory of her husband"? Furthermore the movement of descent is, surely, the movement of revelation, on which it places particular emphasis. After all, the time Christ passed in contemplation was a preparation for his time of action; and the time of his vision of the Father was the preparation for the supreme moment, decisive for the world's redemption, of the "nonvision", the "My God, why have you forsaken me?" In fact, this obscurity of his must be held to be the fulfillment of the Son's contemplation in his earthly state; therein the *contemplata aliis tradere* was carried to the point of total renunciation, emptying, kenosis of contemplation in action carried to its utmost extreme, when action ends by becoming passion. All kinds of considerations are suggested here, which, while they do not invalidate the old conception, show that, as formulated, it bears only on a comparatively superficial aspect of the problem.

¹³ Ibid., c. 7 ad 7.

¹⁴ S Th II, II, 182, 4.

The problem is approached on a deeper level by Aquinas when he bases the concepts of the active and contemplative life on the more general concepts of the two dispositions, the active productive, on the one hand, and the contemplative receptive, on the other. And since he derives these explicitly from the two basic dispositions of the intellect,¹⁵ the problem merges into that of the relations between these two. Now, however, it becomes at once apparent that contemplation is far from being mere passive reception; it is an act in which *actio* and *passio* are combined, and, in another aspect, the highest activity of the created spirit. Thomas was fully conscious of this paradox of the creature, namely that the more it is receptive to God, the more it participates in his activity,¹⁶ so that, as the power of contemplation increases, so does that of action; in fact, the highest act of the spirit, intellectual vision, is always described (with Aristotle) as *operatio*, though it is also (as Augustine maintained) reception of the absolute Object.

From this it follows that the distinction between the two kinds of life is wholly a human one, and valid only for human life on earth; consequently, it is no more than provisional. For the angels there is no distinction between action and contemplation.¹⁷ Likewise with Adam there was no opposition between the two; his action meant no interruption to his contemplation.¹⁸ The opposition only arose when, through sin, activity became a hindrance, a disturbance to contemplation.¹⁹ In the saints, who had overcome the source of this hindrance, the former unity, at least in some degree, is restored, the unity which, present in angels and men untainted by sin, reflected the

¹⁵ *Activum et contemplativum, sive speculativum et practicum, sunt differentiae intellectus.* Ibid., 179, 1, obj. 2.

¹⁶ *Quanto aliqua natura Deo vicinior, tanto minus ab eo inclinatur et nata est seipsam inclinare.* De Ver 22, 4.

¹⁷ S Th II, II, 181, 4 ad 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, 94, 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., II, II, 181, 4 ad 2.

design of the Creator. And just as the angels, when engaged in their active mission, never lose the vision of God,²⁰ so must the perfect man be capable of regaining the original state of harmony.

The whole problem of the nature of truth, which is both theoretical and practical, points in the same direction. Here we can only give some indications of its complexity. Truth, contemplated and received, is also active, and this in two respects: first, as the immanent act of the spirit, both in the process of discursive reasoning and in intellectual vision—there can be no intellect without will,²¹ will and intellect presuppose each other²²—secondly, a direct consequence of this, because truth must be acted upon as well as perceived. This is the true sense of the existential character of truth; we only really possess it, when we do it; it has not only to be grasped and seen in concepts, but expressed in the whole of one's being and life. This leads on at once to John's "*facere veritatem*" (Jn 3:21), and he certainly is not to be suspected of activism. Something of the kind is expressed by Thomas when he points out that many acts belong equally to the active and contemplative life, and are explained in terms of each. Thus prudence, in the strict sense, is one of the moral virtues, which pertain to the active life, but in the wider sense it pertains to the contemplative;²³ and if the active virtues are seen as preparing the way for the contemplative, they too belong to the contemplative life.²⁴ Consequently the two dispositions, contemplative and active, though one may be more pronounced in a given case than the other, form part of a deeper unity. They condition each other mutually, as do intellect and will, between which there exists a reciprocal priority, contemplation being a prerequisite of true action,²⁵ and action the indispensable condition of true contemplation.²⁶ The highest point of attainment is a

²⁰ Greg., *Mor* I, 2 c. 2.

²¹ *S Th* I, 16, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, ad obj.

²³ *Ibid.*, II, II, 181, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 181, 1 ad 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 181, 1 ad 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 181, 1 ad 2.

unity wherein action occurs not—as is often the danger—to the detriment of contemplation,²⁷ but as its fulfillment; much as the Church is the fullness of Christ, not that she adds anything, but provides the sphere for this fullness to spread abroad, make itself known and work its effect.

Thomas admits no exclusiveness in the choice of vocations. There may well be a natural propensity, in various cases, more to action or to contemplation, but those more suited to the active life can, by their active work, be schooled to contemplation, and those attracted to the contemplative life may take on the work of the active life in order to fit themselves better for contemplation.²⁸

3

So far we have not reached the core of the problem, but have remained on the philosophical level. To do so, we must go direct to revelation, making it the ultimate criterion, and if any previous conclusions fail to withstand the test, they must be discarded without hesitation.

1. What is of greatest significance here is the example of Christ, whose life exhibits a whole network of relationships between contemplation and action. As to his inner disposition, what we may call the background of his soul, it was always a constant, uninterrupted unity of both. Just as the Trinity is ever at rest and at work, ever beholds itself and continues the missions within the Godhead, so is the soul of Christ ever occupied with the vision of the Father and carrying out his mission: "The Son cannot do anything . . . but what he sees the Father doing" (Jn 5:19). Christ's contemplation consists in his being the Word of the *Father*, his action in his being the *Word* of the Father. "I speak that which I have seen with my Father" (Jn 8:38). The fact that his own witness is a double witness expresses the unity, grounded

²⁷ Per modum subtractionis: *ibid.*, 182, 1 ad 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 ad 3.

in the Trinity, of action and contemplation. Because it is so grounded, it is no dead sameness, but an expression of the most intense life, of the divine life, which can only be translated into human terms in Christ's life by the temporal interaction of the two poles. So it is that his whole life consists in thirty years of contemplation and three of action, these in turn opening with the forty days of contemplation. Furthermore he devotes his days to action, his nights to contemplation, drawing, by his action, the disciples and the people more and more deeply into his contemplation, making them see that his action is simply the expression of his contemplation. The whole time of the Lord on earth can be considered action that flows from the fullness of his heavenly and eternal contemplation, and returns to it. It can also be seen as flowing from his heavenly and eternal action, which consists in doing the Father's will in eternity—in fact, to be the infinite expression of this will, the Father's will personified; and so both his eternal contemplation and his temporal action and contemplation can be seen as serving his eternal action. He is the perfect unity of action and passive acceptance; he is generated by the Father and, at the same time, he makes fully his own this generative act. The sole measure for both his action and contemplation is his absolute love for the Father; whatever proceeds from this love is perfect and unsullied. His descent into the world is something as perfect as his abiding with the Father; his love for his fellowmen as perfect as that for his Father. Nor is his action on earth any less perfect than his contemplation in heaven.

In the light of this, whatever remains of Greek intellectualism in Thomas must be abandoned. It is no solution of the problem to assign the love of God to contemplation and the love of one's neighbor to action, and to subordinate the latter to the former.²⁹ The love spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13 is as much love for God as for one's neighbor, equally active and contemplative. Again, it is useless to assign the intellectual vision of what is above man (whereby man is associated with God and the angels) to contemplation and to assign

²⁹ Ibid., II, II, 182:1.

concern for earthly things by the *ratio inferior* (whereby man is associated with the animals) to action,³⁰ something which need obliges us to endure.³¹ For if this descent to a lower level really occurs *propter abundantiam divini amoris, ut ejus voluntas impleatur, propter ipsius gloriam* [because of the abundance of God's love, to fulfil his will for his own glory], and if this was clearly Christ's way, any contrary value judgment is clearly false, all previous ideas of relative importance must give way to the normative movement of Christ himself.

This is all the more imperative in that, as we have seen already, Christ's action and contemplation, inseparable as they are, issue finally in the passion, which, as the ultimate aim (*télos*; Jn 13:1) of his earthly life, was likewise that of his action and contemplation. The passion was the immanent end of his action, since all his works and achievements lead logically to their climax in the voluntary sacrifice of his life (Jn 10:18). Thus it is that his passion is the culmination of his action, his weakness the culmination of his strength, his final impotence the most striking expression of his omnipotence, his failure the moment of his highest achievement. And the eucharist, which makes permanent his self-giving for the world, is what universalizes his action in the Church, formerly bound by temporal restrictions. The passion is equally the end of his contemplation, inasmuch as the latter was his abiding disposition to let the Father's will work in him. Because his action finally becomes the passion, he shows the world that the former was always a form of his contemplation, that the Father was in him, spoke by him, and worked the works that he did. And since his contemplation becomes, in the passion, the night of not-seeing, it is also the culmination of human contemplation, where God prevails so much that even the sight of his light is destroyed by that very light, that summit is reached that is described by the Areopagite as "dazzling darkness", of which the perfect example was that experienced on the cross. Here again the eucharist is the culmination and perpetuation of his contemplation on the cross, since in it he continues to pour himself forth, always ready to give himself completely.

³⁰ Ibid., I, II, 3, 5; II, II, 182, 1.

³¹ Ibid., II, II, 182, 2.

2. Christ's attitude is the model for the Christian, for whom Christ, and no other, is the standard. The Christian is, in the first place, Mary, who in contrast with Christ as God and man represents the unity of action and contemplation in a pure creature. At the same time, she incarnates the feminine form of this unity, as distinct from the masculine form of the Son, though he too prefigures the feminine form, insofar as everything in the created order is receptive in relation to God. Both as a woman and as a creature, and also (as Scheeben says) as the archetype of the Church, contemplation is her chief concern; her cooperation consists in acceptance, holding herself in readiness as the vessel of the Word. Her action, therefore, itself has a pronounced contemplative character. Over and above this, she completes, as woman and helper, the work of her Son as man. During the time of her contemplation, she is intensely active, in order to foster her contemplation; during the time of her action, she is intent on contemplation, so that prayer may accompany her action. Only in the Passion, when all distinction and priority as to action and contemplation finally disappear, does her hour and that of the Son coincide perfectly.

The creature's readiness to receive God's word differs from that of Christ in that, for the former, the word is always something far beyond his comprehension, impossible to measure, and to be received only in the obedience of faith. Man's response to it must be a readiness to let God ceaselessly widen and expand his spirit for the reception of the word. This is especially the case for those whose vocation it is to preach and interpret the word of God in the Church. But should anyone think that he has understood sufficiently for himself or for others, or be content with the ideas he has worked out as adequate for his work "for the time being", he misconceives the essence of the word, its divinity and transcendence of all human ideas, and so cannot any longer speak of it in a Christian way. The only person whose witness sounds credible is one whose audience feels that he speaks from a sense of "the charity of Christ which surpasses all knowledge" (Eph 3:18).

While the Christian life ostensibly consists in alternate periods of action and contemplation, its aim should be to make the two interpenetrate more and more. With the saints they were no longer dis-

tinguishable. The saint in his activities can be in a perfect state of contemplation. In the sick whom he serves he sees Christ; in his obedience he sees and makes his own the grace of Christ's obedience; and so, in the formula of Ignatius, he can be *in actione contemplativus*. Furthermore he does not himself decide the extent of his action and of his contemplation, so as not to incur the risk of losing his contemplation in an excess of action; nor does he consider that intensification of action assures him a corresponding advance in contemplation. He is always conscious that the formula *in actione contemplativus* itself presupposes the ancient patristic and Thomistic *ex abundantia contemplationis activus*. Above all, he guards himself from the attempt to mark out the effective range of his action, which, in any case, is fed by contemplation, itself not limited in its effects. The fruit of Christian action, since it is a divine fruit, always goes beyond its visible range. It comes, therefore, in part within the sphere of contemplation, just as the fruit of contemplation itself is action not always perceptible to the contemplative. This is what we now have, finally, to consider.

3. The Fathers and the Scholastics were unable to develop fully a Christian doctrine of contemplation and action, because they shared with the Greek philosophers a too-individualistic idea of contemplation, and so failed to see where its real fruitfulness lay. Thomas, along with all who preceded him, saw fruitfulness as preeminently due to action, and action, therefore, as that which makes contemplation fruitful.³² But the contemplation which is concerned with God alone he held to be a purely individual affair. Though he placed the *religio mixta* above the purely contemplative, he made the *vita eremitica* higher than the *vita socialis*, since "the perfect man is sufficient to himself", however much the *vita socialis* was necessary to bring him to this perfection.³³ It is astonishing how long it took for men to see that this self-sufficient perfection, to be Christian, must be, in a mysterious sense, a life fruitful for the Church, radiating out into the apostolate. The lack of this perception makes the arguments of the Fathers and Scholastics for

³² S Th II, II, 188, 6.

³³ Ibid., 188, 8.

the superiority of contemplation not fully convincing. De Guibert had reason to be surprised that even Suárez seems to have had hardly any inkling of the significance of contemplation for the apostolate. Admittedly the fruit of contemplation cannot be assessed in the terms of this world. That part of it that Thomas saw, the effect on teaching and preaching, is only a small one. The greater part of it remains hidden in the mystery of God's action, in the invisible action of grace over the entire Church, indeed the whole of mankind. And it is just because the contemplative renounces any vision of his fruits that his action is so widespread, pouring out like a river into the limitless sea of God's infinite action, flowing too into the inexhaustible treasury of the Church and, in consequence, of greater social and communal significance than anything else. The pure contemplative, as Thérèse of Lisieux said, completely renounces not only material, but also spiritual possessions. Her autobiography culminates in an apothlosis of the power of contemplation. She calls it the Archimedean point from which the world can be raised up; it sends to God flowers which, when gathered by the Church triumphant and passed through the Lord's hands, "receive immeasurable value", "are strewn over the Church suffering, to extinguish her flames, and over the Church militant to ensure her victory". The condition for this, she repeats, is that the contemplative renounce seeing the fruit for himself; that, with the contemplative and eucharistic Lord, he be wholly intent on transmitting it; that he desire nothing more than "to be a ray proceeding from the forehead of my mother", the Church.

The fruitfulness of pure contemplation is not a privilege reserved to it alone, but points to what is ultimately the sole source of fruitfulness both of action and contemplation: charity. We may here substitute for "fruitfulness" the word "meritoriousness" (which, however, is narrower than the former), and then this same truth is expressed in the statement: *efficacia et radix meriti est caritas*—the efficacy and root of merit is charity.³⁴ But charity "seeks not her own" (1 Cor 13:5); it does not aim at "accumulating merits" for oneself, but at giving the fruits it

³⁴ S Th I, II, 114, 4; II, II, 182, 2.

bears to God and the Church—fruits of its contemplative action or active contemplation. “Do not lay in stores. Distribute the goods as soon as they are received. Even if you live to be eighty years old, remain poor. Learn how to avoid saving up, give all you have back again at once” (Thérèse of Lisieux).

CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM

For many Catholics, Christian thinking reached its final, glorious consummation with Thomas Aquinas; and, likewise, for many Protestants the world begins with Luther. Should they chance to wander awhile outside the enclosure of the Reformation, it is for the sake of showing that all roads lead to Wittenberg, that the Middle Ages were Pelagian, the patristic era Neoplatonist, and Irenaeus already a papist. They fully subscribe to Claudel's passage: "Of none of the saints was it written that he was necessary, but Luther *had* to come" (*The Satin Slipper*, fifth day, scene 1); and, further, they consider him the key to Church history. For if the Reformation, with the separation from Rome, had not been necessary, the bough on which they sit would be extremely precarious. The division of the Church is axiomatic to Protestant thought of whatever complexion. Catholic thought, on the contrary, presupposes that the division was not necessary, that if both sides think deeply and widely enough and in the spirit of obedience, agreement can and must be reached, and that Protestantism, which the Catholic Church is obliged to describe as heretical, is yet, ultimately and seen in the light of its origins, only a schism.

Catholics are compelled to this view by obedience to the God of the Old and New Testaments, to whose command the splitting of the Church is diametrically opposed. Whatever justification for it may be proposed on the ground of historical or philosophical necessity, none can be adduced from theology or purely Christian considerations. We should meditate long and seriously on the lapidary sentences of Karl Barth which I put at the beginning of my study of him; in them he brands as an act of disobedience any attempt to derive a plurality of churches from the New Testament (*Theol. Existenz* 27, 6ff.). Plurality is not to be treated otherwise than as an effect of sin, and that means, primarily, for each person, his own sin. And this is intensified whenever one of the contestants presupposes as a maxim that there must be separate churches. There is, in fact, in a Christian view, no such necessity. Even the plea "I cannot see it otherwise" will not excuse a person before the eternal judge. Our guilt before world history is

immeasurable; for, when the quarrels between Christian bodies destroy the unity of Christ's Church, the unity intended as the living proof of his commandment, then its witness to the world of the power of love is simply a mockery. In place of Christianity we now have "confessions", whose essence it is to stress mainly the "anti", at least for psychological (the Catholics) if not theological (for Protestants) reasons. As a result, they become, in practice, useless for the mission incumbent on Christianity at all times, now more than ever: to offer the principle of a unity to the world and its history that transcends all their differences. "But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"; and this applies not only to the salt, but to those who should be salted. For the truth is that the Christian with his claim to bring all minds into the captivity of Christ is irritating enough to men, but he becomes intolerable when, by making subtle distinctions, he produces additional bonds to lay on them.

Some may claim that the Christian message, especially in these days, can only commend itself as reflecting the spirit of its Founder if it is made clear that its prohibitions derive from a fundamental and comprehensive affirmation, such as accords both with theology and with practical needs and the human disposition; accords, that is to say, both with all the Christian confessions and with the religious, ethical and philosophical attitudes of mankind in general, without on that account countenancing anything inconsistent with Christianity. In short, it should exhibit itself as one—perhaps the best, the highest—offshoot of the common stem of natural and human religion as evidenced throughout history. This, in fact, is the course taken by liberalism of every stamp; and anyone who adopts it is sure of the applause of all non-Christians, who quite legitimately seek the unity of religion in that of human nature and its universal quest for God.

The opposite extreme is that of those who, in the name of the unity of Christ, condemn this attempt at unity on theological grounds or even regard it as a rampart erected against Christ and the preachers of the truth, and therefore to be battered down. There remains only the middle way, according to which unity is given from above, precisely because it is absolute and not *prima inter pares religiones*, as what fundamentally—even in the midst of crises and conflicts, and, when

they must come, upheavals—evinces itself as affirming, embodying and fulfilling all human needs and aspirations. This attitude may be called a “universalism” from above, meaning that the “peak”, which is God’s revelation in Christ and its proclamation, is not the outcome of the “base”, the world and human nature, but is the peak *of* the base (or *above* the base), which is all it can be; the more so, in fact, in that it refers itself to the base, and for its sake has come into being as revelation. Those who cry alarm at this attitude on the ground that the relationship envisaged is “dangerous” and slippery, that those who adopt it will be swept away by the undertow (of the “base”), of which there are numerous examples in the history of theology, are right in their warning, but not in their attempt to prohibit it. The Church’s transcendence over the world is given in advance, it is not a resultant of other causes. Therefore theology also transcends philosophy, and cannot do without it, since all human thought is *Weltanschauung*, “philosophy”. Anyone who fails to realize this will fall into both extremes. He will first set theology alongside philosophy, and so, willy-nilly, hold it as one *Weltanschauung* among others; and then protest against this confusion, and, in combating it, withdraw into an isolationist position.

It would be hard to acquit the historical phenomenon known as dialectical theology of partial guilt for the disruption of German philosophy. Doubtless, the more rabid “dialecticians” would rejoice at this, since they consider German philosophy to be a secularization and degeneration of orthodox Protestantism, and that a *tabula rasa* would be better than this ignominy. But the consequence of this, among the more alert of the younger theologians, has been a feeling of suffocation in a prison of their own choosing, of having lost contact with the age, of unreality. This, in turn, has led to an attempt at escape into the old Bismarckian regimentation of the Church, or into individual skirmishes in the no-man’s-land between orthodoxy and liberalism (demythologizing), as if “fresh air” could be expected from there. This is not the way to regain contact with actual history, nor will it come through endless talk about “historicity”. The only way is by a resolute change in the inmost heart; to eschew quarrelsomeness in favor of an open Catholic attitude, in the best

sense of that expression, that is, free of suspiciousness, ready to credit others with the best intentions. There must be the conviction that, since history in the Old Testament right up to its culmination in the incarnation played such a theological role, it is only right that it should do so in the time of the Church, when the "body" is growing up—and this implies a temporal, historical dimension—to the fullness of age already attained by Christ, the Head. God came not to judge history, but to save it. Still less is such judgment incumbent on the theologian, whose attitude should be one of affirmation, blessing it with the benediction of God. Indeed this is the only Christian approach.

Karl Barth's keen interest in history, even secular history, political and economic, is well known. It would, however, be a mistake for us to consider it merely an occupation for his leisure; it is, in fact, all part of his work as theologian. The study of the Bible and that of secular history, when pursued in an open, receptive spirit, do not result in two separate views of reality. Admittedly it is not accorded us to construct a "synthesis" of the two, a theology of history, for we know that the synthesis, the full unity, subsists in Christ. So we are careful not to make its study serve our conceptions—whether those of the Reformation or of our own favored dogmatic system! Instead, we allow it to lead up to him in whom takes place "the restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, from the beginning of the world" (Acts 3:21).

In Karl Barth we meet with a Protestantism which, in contrast with the dogmatism of many of his disciples, has the power to reach beyond the sphere of controversy, and to regain a genuine Christian universalism. Though he makes no concession to liberalism (which, of course, can be "universal" and conciliatory, but only through abandoning the difference between "peak" and "base"), yet in him for the first time Protestant theology seems to have attained an inner catholicity of the theological reason, and so to have engaged in a real dialogue with the *Weltanschauungen*. For Karl Barth the history of the Church of Christ begins not with the Reformation, but with Christ. The main point of his exposition of Luther is that his real function was to bring about a reform of certain essential doctrines within the one

Corpus christianum, whereas his "founding a church" was a mistake with tragic consequences. The most significant positive part of Barth's work is his doctrine of predestination and his eschatology so closely bound up with it. Here, in the most crucial points, he parts company with Calvin. He gives the primacy to christology, even as regards God's original decree of creation, and thereby frees his teaching completely from the Protestant ethos that, more than anything else at the present time, hinders the propagation of the gospel, now that the world has become conscious of its unity. The outer coat he strips off was not due, in the first place, to the Reformation, though strengthened by it, but much more, though not exclusively, to the early and high Middle Ages. Its real origin was Augustine and his doctrine of the last things, not a dialectical but a dualistic doctrine. Its formal structure seems to have remained with Augustine from his eleven years of Manichaeism, and to have been so much a part of his mind that it patently affected even his last controversial writings, quite apart from its more hidden workings, as in the general plan of the *Civitas Dei*. It gave rise to a grim doctrine of predestination, which was taken up, in an almost slavish spirit, by succeeding generations. What they lacked in particular was a historical and philological outlook which would have enabled them to have brought out the true import, dialectical and eschatological, of the ideas and terminology of the two Testaments, instead of interpreting them cosmologically. It was Augustine who spoke the words "*territus terreo*" (*Sermo* 40, c. 3; *PL* 38:246), and his fears prevented him from seeing, despite his genius, "how his constant referring to the tension between mercy and justice meant putting this tension in the place of the sovereign God and of God's love, which, according to the great passage in the Epistle to the Romans, is the sole ultimate factor, for 'God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he may have mercy on all.'"¹

Karl Barth, in going back beyond Augustine and the influence he had on the whole official theology up to Calvin, finds himself unexpectedly in the field of pre-Augustine patrology, and is confronted with its most powerful thinker, one who, through his universalism, has

¹ Przywara, *Augustinus, Die Gestalt als Gefüge* (Hegner, 1934), III.

affected, more than anyone else, his own and subsequent generations. Anyone who approaches the great Alexandrian with unbiased mind, and compares him with Barth, while allowing for the obvious differences and the centuries that separate them, will be struck at once by their affinity. Origen, of course, thought in a Hellenistic environment, his idea of the world was Gnostic, his psychology Stoic and Platonist, he adhered to the allegorism of Philo, as well as, though less explicitly, to current ideas of the same sort. All this, however, does not constitute the real object of his impassioned thought, nor, in consequence, the original and captivating quality of his theology.²

We are indebted to Origen and Karl Barth for the two most coherent outlines of a theology of the Word, the Word that is the eternal Son of the Father—not, however the *Logos nudus*, but *incarnandus* and *incarnatus*. It is he who upholds the creation and is its justification, and, in his historical revelation, finally embodied in scripture, evinces himself as the ultimate meaning of the whole creation and as the revelation of the Father inherent in it from the beginning. It would be a misunderstanding of Origen's basic position to subordinate the incarnation of the Logos to a universal, neutral presence of him in every created reason. This presence is indeed affirmed in that Origen has no conception of reason except as the organ for hearing the Word, and he expounds the words "In the midst of you there stands one whom you know not" in the sense of the presence (*parousia*) of the Logos in the midst of every man's reason. At the same time, his attitude to the heretical and non-Christian sects and philosophies makes it quite plain that he had no intention of subordinating the historical revelation of the Word to a general, neutral one. He saw the latter at most as provisional and preparatory, or else something obscure and distorted, from which it was possible to learn a little, particularly in the way of philosophical or dialectical exposition, but always

² There is hardly any account of his work that does full justice to his central thesis. One may consult A. Lieske, *Die Theologie der Logosmystik bei Origenes* (1938), my "Mysterion d'Origène", *Revue des sciences religieuses*, XXVI/XXVII 1936/37, and *Origenes: Geist und Feuer* (1954), and especially de Lubac: *Histoire et Esprit. L'intelligence de l'écriture d'après Origène* (Aubier, 1950).

recalling the Christian thinker, who should profit by them, to his own special heritage (*spolia Aegyptiorum*). For him the center of world history is the process of redemption, to which he devotes unremittingly all the energies of his mind. As described in the Bible, it presents three elements, which he precisely delineates: the inseparableness (if not complete identity) of the Logos as Christ, God and man, and the Logos as scripture, which is essentially a manifestation of Christ (the letter as "body" and "sacrament" of the Word); though he never equates the letter—behind which the exegete can never go for the sake of grasping the naked sense or event—with the Logos-Person. The second element is the inner mutual relationship of universalism and divine election in the economy of salvation, a tension which, for Karl Barth, is solved only by the idea of social representation on the one hand (for Origen, as a Catholic, the idea too of co-representation on the part of Christ's disciples: the apostles and the "Gnostics" or "saints", who pray, combat, sacrifice themselves for the Church and mankind), and by Paul's idea of grace ever outweighing guilt (Rom 5), on the other. The history of salvation, decided once and for all, is prolonged in the individual's decisions for himself and self-commitment.

Finally, the third element, closely bound up with the others, is one strongly emphasized by Origen—the contemporaneous character of revelation, of the Word as here and now proceeding from the Father. It means the continuing demand that we, as persons, should encounter the Word as a person, go beyond the "letter" and comprehend and fulfill it as "spirit". It is this characteristic which imparts to the whole of Origen's theology a dynamism enabling it to penetrate through every external covering, every rite, institution and outward historical circumstance to the spiritual truth, so that he almost comes to view as merely phenomenal the outer envelope of "flesh", "letter", "sacrament" and "institution". Yet it is the same dynamism that, if we abstract from confessional differences, we find in Karl Barth. Now it is this dynamism, and not a Gnostic preconception foreign to the Bible, that enables Origen, more adequately than any of his successors, to grasp the double aspect of the revealed word in its "existential dialectic" of judgment and grace, both in the Old Testament utterances, especially the prophets, and in the sayings of Christ and their exposition by Paul

and John. Origen (as also Karl Barth; see his *Epistle to the Romans*) at first, in the *Peri Archon*, succumbed to the temptation of a "systematic" exposition of this double aspect, and it cost him dear; but, subsequently, he consistently strove to harmonize his treatment with that of scripture. In other words, his whole aim was to avoid playing down the aspect of judgment in favor of that of grace, while not darkening the picture so much as to minimize the aspect of grace and weaken the force of the words of Paul and John. We cannot just solve the question by the shibboleth "*apokatastasis*", a term rightly applied to the pantheist systems of later disciples such as Evagrius and Bar Sudaili. They made the Hellenic principle of decline and restoration prevail everywhere, even in the history of salvation; but for Origen, with his scrupulous attention to the words of scripture, the term had a much more restrained meaning. Apart from a few places outside the *Peri Archon*, he uses a suitably biblical terminology. At most it could be said that he elicits a great deal from a passage in virtue of an implicit preconception, and that many a text, which, read in a different connection, would be lacking in force and color, becomes extraordinarily illuminating, just as the fascinating power of Karl Barth's exegesis in connection with the doctrine of predestination (he himself speaks of a "strange illumination") derives from the same implied supposition.

Yet, since for both the person of Christ, who represents the *autobasileia*, is in his sovereign freedom the judgment and pronounces it, the assertion does not prejudice the future, but remains open and full of hope—which, being a theological virtue, excludes no possibility. They both excel in showing how the twofold aspect of the cross (election joined with reprobation) is reflected in the history of salvation, especially in the relationship of the Jews and gentiles, of the Old and the New Testaments. It is here that Origen, like the Karl Barth of the second *Epistle to the Romans*, manifests a decided sense of the dialectic, the "hazardous quality" of the election of the individual in the Church (see commentary on Ez 16). Origen, it is true, stresses even more than Barth the agony of the Christian life, the involvement of the spiritual man in the struggle between light and darkness, between Christ and the powers of evil. Yet he is, at the same time, conscious of the inequality of the two opponents, of the ontological nothingness of

the evil principle, so strongly emphasized by Barth and given prominence by Origen's successors, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus, Erigena. In this context, Origen does more justice to the two aspects, and so to the biblical record, than does Barth in that he takes a graver view of the strength of what is negative and its temptations, and feels that sin—especially that of Christians—is an outrage done to the Logos who, even though glorified, continues (in Pascal's sense) his passion to the end of the world.

This leads us to a highly important topic. It is constantly objected against Barth that his optimistic universalism cannot be brought into harmony with the facts of sin and judgment as presented in such somber terms in both Testaments. This objection is not without foundation, in that Barth does not give sufficient weight to certain counter-balancing factors in the Bible, which, however, are quite consistent with his position as already described. It is not enough to adduce the idea (not exclusively biblical, but strongly Neoplatonist) of the essential nothingness of evil, which cannot enter into any real competition with God, and to invoke the great contrast between the state of being with God (heaven, immunity from death) and that of rejection by God (hell, conceived by Thomas as "evil infinity", endless temporality). The counterweight consists in the solemn and momentous character of the words of judgment addressed by the Lord and his apostles and prophets to the sinner, their absoluteness in the sense of transcending all that is temporal and all relationship with time. And it consists, in addition, in the existentiality of theological "science" as such, a property manifested in the (Catholic) "science of the saints", and not foreign to Karl Barth, but yet only reaching its full development when the (Catholic) grace—*pure* grace!—of the Church's participation in Christ's redemptive work is recognized as possible and an actual reality. The experiences to which John of the Cross gave the name of the dark night of the spirit, and which are constantly repeated in the (above all, Roman!) Western Church, keep alive in her a vivid consciousness of how tremendous and frightful a reality was endured on the cross, something far beyond what could be described as God's wrath with and condemnation of a creature. This is the reason for a certain hesitation in the preaching of the absolute victory

of Christ, even with Paul and John, as also for the agitation pervading Origen's work, and which, down the centuries, distinguishes, by a fine, hardly perceptible line, Catholic from Protestant universalism.³ A danger which Protestant teaching does not always escape is that of a certain exhilaration at being redeemed, as extreme as was the despondency resulting from an obsession with guilt. Karl Barth's keen sense of theological balance keeps him free from both these extremes; but lesser minds, claiming affinity with him, find perhaps in the "tremendous illumination" by which he himself was shaken occasion for misplaced emphases. How one should speak of a mystery which one must neither ignore nor vulgarize is a permanent question in this life of ours, which always involves a profanation of what is sacred.

Origen was alive to this existential dimension of theology. He expressed it in contemporary language, and, since he had no other terminology to work with, he applied to it the distinction between the *Haplousteroi* and the *Gnostikoi*—implying thereby a certain esoterism, though in typical fashion he did not press it unduly. We can do without these expressions, for what they signify can always be presented in the analogy between those whose knowledge is inward, the effect of grace (the true "theologians", as understood by the Fathers, such as Gregory of Nazianzen and the Areopagite), and those who view the mysteries more from the outside, and construct a system about them.

Our intention is not to present the "system" of Origen as obliga-

³ "... Denique cupit anathema fieri a Christo pro fratribus suis... Nonne summae amentiae videtur esse, veram Vitam repellere, summam Sapientiam arguere, Omnipotentiae resistere? Nonne Vitam repellit qui pro fratribus a Christo separari cupit, sicut et ille qui dicit: 'Aut ignosce illis hanc noxam, aut dele me de libro quem scripsisti?' Nonne Sapientiam arguere seu velle docere videtur, qui ad Dominum loquitur: 'Absit a te ut hanc rem facias et occidas cum impio justum, fiatque justus sicut impius' (Gen. 18:25; see Ex 32). Non est tuum hoc, qui judicas omnem terram, nequaquam facies judicium! Nonne Omnipotentiae resistere tentavit, Omnipotentisque iram mitigare homo praesumpsit atque praevaluit, quando jam egressa sententia a Domino, quando jam saeviente incendio, igni furenti se objecit? ..." Richard of St. Victor, *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis* (PL 196, 1224).

tory or even as a model for Christian theology. We mention it only as historically the most influential body of thought outside the long period from Augustine to Calvin. In the patristic era there were certainly other theologians who, in their whole work or in considerable parts of it, presented a true Christian universalism in the sense of Karl Barth. In fact, they were not lacking in the Middle Ages, as we may see from the Christocentric theology in the last book of *De Docta Ignorantia* of Nicholas of Cusa.

We can look for a moment on the theme we started with. What we said about "peak" and "base" will be viewed with misgiving by Karl Barth and his followers. It is, once again, the Catholic harmonization of opposites. The concepts of creation and testament are also seen to be in accord; in the last analysis, this means the accord between Father and Son. The readiness of the preacher of the gospel to accept the thought and philosophy of mankind shows two things. The first is that he has no hesitation in taking in the fullest sense the command "unto all the ends of the earth the gospel must be preached", that man is to be taken as he is (and this includes his *Weltanschauung*, which necessarily confronts him with God—even in his idolatry!). The second is the conviction that Christ, the victor and Lord of all peoples, is already in the place where the preacher comes, who, therefore, may with perfect rightness look on the alien *Weltanschauung* as already touched with the light of Christ. For God himself has already contemplated the world in that same light, and even before, chronologically speaking, the event of Christ's death.

In this historical situation—and there is simply no other—something more should be said about the meaning of the *analogia entis*. The fundamental openness of Christian teaching to the *thing* (not the word!) is all part of what goes to make up the Catholic idea of Christian (and theological) universalism; in fact, it is the most striking instance of this approach.

1. First, it should be noticed that at the time when the inquiry into being was vigorously pursued, this term was one of God's names, and therefore, *essentially*, not a concept at all. The expression "concept of being" (*conceptus entis*) is a self-contradiction, as every Western philosophy worthy of the name will admit. "Openness" to the incompre-

hensible mystery of being is the transcendental prerequisite for any conceptual structure. The Greek Fathers and Augustine took up the position that "natural" reason, by the very fact of being unable to understand *what* God is, and in foregoing any statement about his essence, comes to know *that* he is and is this "is", just because, as eluding understanding (*si comprehendis, non est Deus*), it is experienced as incomparable with all that we experience as being in the context of this world; in relation to this it is "ever more dissimilar". If this "structure", outside of which there is no human thought, is not taken into account, there can be no recognition of the "divine" quality of revelation or that the divine voice "descends" to us from an absolutely transcendent sphere. Karl Barth might reply that only the divine voice itself can make known to us the height from which it descends; otherwise, man could know and measure prior to revelation the distance that separates him and God. This would of course be true if we took *esse* as a concept, as the textbooks do when they deal with analogy, though with the proviso that it is a question "only of an analogous concept". However, in so doing, they forget that the formal ontology they treat of is the *Mysterium tremendum* of the Godhead, which, while it has decreed from the beginning to speak with the creature, yet betrays by the tone of its voice that it was free to keep eternally silent. It is always possible, and often useful, to protest against the facile nature of textbook formulas, but such protests must always be accompanied by reflection on the subject to which they refer.

2. More positively: *Esse* is a name of God, and not one that we just happened to choose, for it does not signify an "attribute", but indicates the basis of all the attributes. It is a name that applies essentially to him alone, which means that his essence is one with his existence. Consequently we arrive, as we reflect, at the point where we have to renounce thinking of God as something "other", as an object apart from us. He is the universality of being—as Sirach 43:29 says, and it is, therefore, evident that he is a partner in a two-sided relationship that, as a relationship of I to Thou, seems of necessity to involve two spheres bounded off from one another. Yet, from the side of God, such a boundary exists, and the habitual ignoring of this fact imperils the success of the Christian message, for it gives non-Christian peoples,

whose experience of God, at its best and purest, is grounded on this boundary, an impression of naivete and lack of insight. That God, although he is the totality of being, deigns to become a partner of man, is the most paradoxical of marvels, one which, posited once and for all by God, never ceases to impress on our minds its character of utter incomprehensibility. For this reason, the Christian preacher must treat the religious experience of other peoples with the most profound and sincere respect—even and especially that of the Asiatics. If he fails in this, he must blame himself for his inability to convey the gospel message to them in acceptable terms.

3. Ultimately we cannot altogether dismiss a treatment of the problem which proceeds not so much on logical as on historical lines, according to the changes in man's general outlook. Every period of the Church's history has its own distinctive characteristics. There is, undeniably, a development of humanity, and even of human consciousness in general, though, to forestall any objection, we do not necessarily thereby mean "progress". Further the presence of Christianity (which does not itself develop, or at any rate not in the same sense) within humanity is, in some degree, involved in this development. Consequently we need not hesitate in saying that, through the continuing presence of the Christian element, which expands and gradually leavens the whole mass, certain changes in the common consciousness of mankind may result. For example, there are certain values whose source is Christian and, therefore, whose final justification lies in Christianity, such as love for one's enemies, the recognition of the rights of one's opponents, of others precisely as such, of one's neighbors in general. These values may be taken over by all men, even non-Christians, and form an integral part of their mentality. The present epoch, just beginning, may be rightly described as one of the encounters of men with one another precisely as men, that is, quite apart from their environment in the world of nature. It is, therefore, an anthropological epoch, in contrast with the cosmological epoch of the past. What characterized the latter was that man was looked on as a part of the whole (macro-)cosmos, which itself appeared as a part, to be defined with more and more precision, of the Absolute, the divine—the spheres led up directly from the earth to God's heaven,

the stars were of an imperishable substance and moved by angels, and so the cosmos was a direct revelation of the Godhead, the "unknown God" of Paul's speech on the Areopagus. Consequently the "natural knowledge of God" was attained simply and directly through the cosmos; this was true even of Hölderlin in his contemplation of the ether or the sun, and of Goethe with his nature as God.

The present time, however, is the age of technology and science, when the human mind dominates the material cosmos, which, in consequence, no longer leads the mind beyond itself to God. The natural knowledge of God, therefore, is not to be reached in the same way as before. Nietzsche's "God is dead" was prompted by the cosmos as "emptied of God", if we ignore, for the moment, the discredited Strauss Christianity of the nineteenth century. The same phenomenon today may well be the clue to the understanding of Karl Barth's critique of the natural knowledge of God; that is, he criticizes it from the standpoint of the present state of development of the human mind. It is beyond question that Paul, in the present condition of natural science, would have spoken differently on the Areopagus. All this does not mean that, now that the cosmological epoch is over, we are also to discard the natural knowledge of God and the *analogia entis* as obsolete. But it does mean that, while the essence of natural religion remains the same, the forms it takes and the experiences on which it is based may change, and the resultant modifications have to be noted.

The situation of man as regards God is not essentially altered. The contemplatives and mystics of old experienced the unreality of the world in the presence of the Absolute; but has not the technological world of today the same, or an intensified, phantomlike unreality to the eyes of anyone who suddenly awakes from it? What, if not this, is the cause of all our neuroses and the antidotes we adopt which are no less unreal? It is in the unreality of our world that there speaks, as ever, the one, imperishable, wholly other reality, the Word. We search nowadays for formulas; but the Word is no formula. It cannot be manipulated or put to serve our purposes. It serves no interest and, therefore, seems to most people to be without interest for them. A formula is something that has found adequate verbal expression; but the Word remains always unique and inexpressible.

SOME POINTS OF ESCHATOLOGY

I. *The present situation*

Eschatology is the storm center of the theology of our times. It is the source of severe squalls that threaten all the theological fields, and makes them fruitful, beating down or reinvigorating their various growths. Troeltsch's dictum: "The bureau of eschatology is usually closed" was true enough of the liberalism of the nineteenth century, but since the turn of the century the office has been working overtime. The whole of liberal theology was radically recast by de Wette, Weiss, Albert Schweitzer and Martin Werner in taking the "parousia that has yet to come" as the starting point, that is to say, eschatology. The countermovement of Karl Barth and his followers is a school which expounds the whole of theology eschatologically. And though Barth himself, since his *Church Dogmatics*, has abjured an exclusive preoccupation with eschatology, yet it is a fact that his reconstruction of the whole of Protestant theology, starting from a complete rejection of the Augustinian and Calvinist doctrine of predestination, is done mainly from an eschatological standpoint. The third principal current of theological thought that produced Bultmann's demythologizing and existentializing of theology likewise has its source in eschatology, both in a negative sense, in that the structure of the "mythical" is essentially concerned with the *eschata*, and positively, since the whole of faith is reduced to the fulfillment of Christ's death and resurrection in the believer.

Nonetheless, it is easy to understand that the remodeling of theology by eschatology has not brought about a settled systematic structure. On the contrary, the last things show up the confused state of the theology. There is no "system" of the last things; and, when they are taken as the point around which a system of theology is to be erected, the closed lines of the preceding dogmatic treatises are opened, and even become entangled. Emil Brunner, writing in 1953, pointed out frankly: "If we ask what this theology, my own included, . . . has achieved in the formulation of eschatology, we must admit, to our

shame and astonishment, that here all we can see is a great vacuum. Hardly anything of real significance has been attained."¹ But perhaps the appearance is deceptive. It is no small achievement for a whole generation of theologians to have learned to pursue theology in the presence of an eschatology whose horizon is left open. In this way, they will gradually come to realize the character of the *eschata* as molding the whole of theological thought, and work out their theology accordingly.

Unlike Protestant theology, Catholic theology does not advance by leaping from extreme to extreme; but it cannot indefinitely forego considering the same problems, and proposing solutions of a more moderate kind. In fact, there is great activity going on here, admittedly often behind the scenes; the shutters remain up, "pending alterations". What is being done is on such a scale and goes so deep that it would be presumptuous in a few pages even to offer anything like a "progress report", and certainly it is out of the question to display the results, which at present are quite impossible to assess. All one can do is to indicate a few directions of theological thought and research; they are basic to Catholic thinking and may well become of more and more importance. Out of the vast mass of publications (those on eschatology alone, in its various aspects, are considerable) only a few works can be cited: those which seem to bring out clearly the main lines.²

The literature in question can be divided into four classes, in which the various topics merge into one another:

1. That which deals with the subject as if nothing of moment had occurred in the past fifty years, or as if it could all be incorporated into the old framework of the medieval and Counter-Reformation treatises by a few additional observations. For the most part, this literature consists of textbooks for students, either recast anew or readaptations of the old.

¹ *Das Ewige als Zukunft und Gegenwart* (Zurich, 1953), 231.

² The copious literature of the last decades can be found mentioned in the works of M. Schmaus, *Von den letzten Dingen* (Munster, 1948), and volume 4 of *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Munich, 1953), 254ff.

2. A number of works of *haute vulgarisation*, in which distinguished authors propose, in essay form, a summary or general account of the whole problem of eschatology or an important part, with a view to contributing to an improvement in the general treatment.³

3. The most significant work is that devoted to specialized subjects. It poses new questions in all fields of eschatology, makes us see old ones in a new way, or else brings up ones that have been forgotten, and teaches us to see the statements of scripture and tradition in a more revealing light. As long as these specialized studies are pursued in a living spirit, their conclusions scrupulously tested, their proposals securely based, we can reconcile ourselves to, even rejoice in the fact that new stones have not been incorporated into an already existing structure.

4. A comprehensive account of present-day eschatology hardly exists. On the Protestant side, *Die Letzten Dinge* (frequently re-edited and recast) may be considered as such, though it has been the subject of much dispute, and has many serious defects. There is nothing similar on the Catholic side, for the best claimant; *Von den letzten Dingen* (1948) by Schmaus, despite its more than seven hundred pages, is more of a collection, excellent indeed, of the different standpoints and their development than a speculative treatment and critique. So far there has been no representative monograph written from the Catholic standpoint, such as those resulting from the vigorous Protestant discussions on eschatology, Cullmann's *Christ and Time*, for example, and the works of the Swedish school. We shall, therefore, attend chiefly to the works in the third category, so as to gain a few indications—all that can be expected—of the direction of present-day studies.

We may conclude this introductory section by emphasizing, though it should not really be necessary, that all the inquiries now in progress do nothing to shake or cast doubt on the established doctrines of the Church. We refer to such doctrines as the universality of death as the consequence of sin; the cessation, with death, of the time of merit;

³ For example, Alois Winkhofer's *The Coming of His Kingdom* (New York, 1963).

the particular judgment; the immediate entrance of the soul on the beatific vision after expiating venial sin or the discharge of temporal punishment in purgatory, or else its entrance on the state of eternal damnation in hell; the Lord's parousia at the end of time; the bodily resurrection of all for the last judgment. Those parts of eschatology that belong to the defined content of faith can be found in any standard theological work; they are not the concern of the present essay. There is, however, another range of questions concerning what lies beyond the bounds of the world of space and time, what happens to man at death, the dissolution of the world into its elements, the passing away of heaven and earth, the termination of history and the gathering of its fruits into the barns of eternity, the judgment on creation and its final state in God. All such matters, it will be readily understood, need to be constantly examined afresh, in case any sense-images, scientific or other hypotheses creep in unobserved which, though they may help to elucidate a part of the truth, soon reveal themselves as merely provisional. We may say that the present studies make no attempt to further the exposition of the message of revelation in its fullness, as is clear from the simplifications which, as we shall see, may be considered the basic feature of modern eschatological thought. It may well be a mission reserved to a subsequent generation to develop from the core of truth now disclosed a more extensive and adequate body of speculation.

2. *The reduction*

Theologians were aware, even before Bultmann's time, that the modern picture of the world, as regards both the structure of nature and its "history", is quite other than the anthropomorphic cosmology of the ancient world, including Israel, and that it devolved on them, however hazardous the enterprise, to prize out revealed truth from the ancient framework of ideas and insert it into the modern. In a sense, there must be a repetition of the experience which Origen passed through when he was faced with the contrast between the few thousand years of biblical history and the Gnostic idea of the abysses

of time known as "aeons", and solved the problem thus posed in favor of the faith by taking his stand squarely on a Christocentric (in the guise of a Logocentric) position. In the nineteenth century men's minds were staggered by the discovery of the enormous span of human history between "Adam" and Abraham. The "aeons" from the beginning of the world to Adam are far more baffling to the imagination. These factors, together with the intimation we now have of the true dimensions of the cosmos, in fact of its continual expansion, seemed at first to make the biblical "end of the world" completely irrelevant to the world we knew. Not only must we discard, therefore, any localization of the eschatological "places" (heaven, hell, purgatory, limbo) in the one world—since that means their transference from a theological cosmos, whose higher and lower regions are the divine and demonic, to a physical—but also cease to regard any "end of time" (say, of the planet Earth) as an event relevant to theology. In consequence, the last things of man, of his history and of the cosmos, must be carried over into an entirely new dimension, which strictly belongs only to revelation and faith. This, in turn, has two consequences. The first is that these *eschata* become, in another way, inaccessible to thought, since the whole system of the world, the whole man in his course from birth to death, is taken up into a single dimension manifested by God's revelation of his dealings with the world. The second is that theology as a whole must be dominated by the *eschata*, become "eschatologized", for now the world, the man, and history realize their true nature only when subjected to God's transforming action.

In other words, the so-called last things, merely because they have become inaccessible to thought, are all the more actual. They have become the "last events" affecting the being and the history of man and the world.⁴ It is no longer the "last things" that are incorpor-

⁴ "Eschatology is becoming, in theological thought, once more what it is in scripture and the Fathers, namely the true significance of history, a significance which, elucidating the whole mystery of the Church, acts as a ferment in the present order of things, and this order will only be understood fully in its final outcome. This sense for the eschatological element is what has most been lacking to

rated into a cosmos understood in the ancient theological sense; it is the cosmos which is now carried over beyond itself into the action of God. This, certainly, involves the danger of a certain "acosmism",⁵ the assertion of a direct relation of the creature with the "*Deus nudus*", who becomes its "last end", in place of all the "things" and "states". But does this not bring us back precisely to the main theme of revelation? Long before Bultmann, Père Lagrange, the great exegete, observed, in connection with one of the most wonderful passages on hope in the Old Testament, (the end of Psalm 72: "I am always with thee. . . . For what have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . But it is good for me to adhere to my God"): "This is no sort of description of hell or paradise: God alone remains before the psalmist's gaze, and he desires only God. To be with God—in heaven or on earth: that is enough. Nothing about cosmology! Here we stand at the center of Israel's faith."⁶ But we must not forget that for the great theologians, just as for scripture, everything in the way of cosmology was merely an accompaniment to the main theme: *Ipse (Deus) post istam vitam sit locus noster* [after this life may God himself be our dwelling place] (Augustine).⁷ God is the "last thing" of the creature. Gained, he is heaven; lost, he is hell; examining, he is judgment; purifying, he is purgatory. He it is to whom finite being dies, and through whom it rises to him, in him. This he is, however, as he presents himself to the world, that is, in his Son, *Jesus Christ*, who is the revelation of God and, therefore, the whole essence of the last

ecclesiology since the sixteenth century. Without it, men looked on the last things not so much as the end and fulfillment of the entire order of creation as an accumulation of 'things', somehow present behind the curtain of death, and which could be studied like the 'things' of earth. They asked: *Quid sit ignis purgatorius? Utrum visio Dei sit per speciem?* just as they inquired, in physics, into the nature of fire, or in epistemology into knowledge through a species. In short, they went in for a kind of physics of the last things. Most of our textbooks on eschatology hark back to this type." Y. Congar in *Rev Sc Ph Th* (1949), 463.

⁵ As may be seen in the "consequent eschatologism" of the young Barth in *Epistle to the Romans* (1922).

⁶ *Revue Biblique* (1905), 195f.

⁷ *En in ps* 30, n. 8 (*PL* 36, 252) in *ps* 70 n. 5 (878).

things.⁸ In this way, eschatology is, almost more even than any other *locus theologicus*, entirely a doctrine of *salvation*. This is, as we shall see, absolutely central.

This enables us to understand why present eschatological thought is so pronouncedly anti-Platonist, often to the point of animosity. The "philosophic solution" of the problem of how man and the world could be eternal despite death and time was at best (after the recourse to magic in the East, and at the time of the pantheistic solutions put forward by the Stoa) the Socratic and Platonist one of distinguishing in man a mortal part (the body) and an immortal one (the soul). Accordingly the word "immortal" presupposes that only the body dies, not the man. Thus the mortal part, in dying, separates from the immortal, though this view fails to take account of the principal element in the phenomenon of death. The whole difficulty for thought—so greatly increased by the very terms of the gospel of salvation—of securing the salvation of the whole man with God was assumed by the psalmist and the prophets; and the necessity, inaccessible to the human view, of this salvation with God must logically, though equally inaccessible to the mind (since it is impossible to justify philosophically), be worked out from the New Testament hope of resurrection for man and the world.⁹

⁸ Jean Daniélou expresses this point well in his *Christologie et Eschatologie*, "Chalcedon", vol. 3, 269–86. He shows that the seemingly unhistorical formula of Chalcedon really contains a biblical and patristic theology of history, and, as it were, takes it for granted. According to this viewpoint, Christ in the hypostatic union of the two natures is the *Eschaton* which governs the time both of the promise and of the fulfillment, and essentially, as he who has come, is the one coming and the one who fulfills all things.

⁹ Platonism clearly dominated Western, even Christian, thinking down to the threshold of modern times; we have only to think of the stress laid on the "immortality of the soul", and how the resurrection was held to be an almost unnecessary "accidental blessedness" superadded to the substantial blessedness already possessed (*Denz* 530). And, despite all the counterarguments of philosophers, such as those of the Stoics and the later Greek philosophers in general, the ancient cosmos remained always something in the nature of a "house", a body (*magnum corpus*) of souls. Greek and medieval man never really thought acosmically. The crisis of Platonism only came with the change in man's image of the world. With this, two

It is just *because* the event wherein the cosmos enters on the "last end" is not capable of explanation in cosmological, intrahistorical terms that God's final act of redemption must be an act done *on* the creature, a new forming of the creature *itself*. The "otherness" of the new aeon is a making other, a making new, of the old; it is not a matter of throwing over the created world and making another, quite different one in its place. Bultmann's concern to apply all revealed truth existentially to man and his world is to be thoroughly approved. But the actual event of this change from the old to the new aeon is the same as Christ's transition from death to resurrection: his "return" to the Father is the *creation of the dimension* into which, by the free grace of God, man and the cosmos begin to be transformed: "Heaven's real becoming."¹⁰ The death of the believer (and, through him, of man generally) is the "incorporation" of the soul into the heavenly body, heavenly "temple", heavenly "house" of the risen humanity of Christ. This is true whether, following the preponderant theological tradition, we make the resurrection of the dead commence in the middle of history with Christ's resurrection (see Matthew 27:52; and not alone Mary in her bodily assumption, as the "accompaniment" to his ascension required by the social character of Christ's bodily condition),¹¹ or whether we follow M. Feuillet in taking the "house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" of 2 Corinthians 5:1 to mean Christ's transfigured humanity, and so the "intermediate state" of which Paul speaks not as a "purely spiritual" one.¹² The resurrection of Christ

things became necessary: the express rejection of the relationship of the souls of the dead to the world, and the equally express incorporation of them into the glorified humanity of Christ.

¹⁰ K. Rahner, "The Resurrection of the Body", *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2, 203ff.

¹¹ H. Zeller, "Corpora Sanctorum, a Study of Mt 27:52-53", *ZKathTh* 71 (1949), 385-465.

¹² *Destinée des chrétiens et fondements de l'eschatologie paulinienne*: "La demeure céleste est le corps glorieux du Christ, mais à titre de prémices de la nouvelle création, c'est à dire, en tant qu'incluant virtuellement le corps glorieux de tous les chrétiens". "L'incorporation au Christ constitue le fondement de l'eschatologie paulinienne." See M. Feuillet, "La demeure céleste et la destinée des chrétiens", *Rech SC Rel* (1956), 161-92, 360-402.

and, with it, eschatology take now a far more pronouncedly central place in Catholic theology than previously. F. X. Durwell,¹³ without the least allusion to Barth¹⁴ or Bultmann, has rearranged the whole of theology around this center, and made the Church, the sacraments, the eucharist, even justification and the whole Christian life proceed from it.

Before we go on to see how the *eschaton* of Christ, as God's dealing with man, determines, absolutely speaking, the final condition of man and the world, we must explain what happened to Christ in such a way that the last things are elucidated as aspects of an event which is christological and ecclesiological in character.

It needs only a renewed attention to a fundamental theme of the theology of the first centuries¹⁵ to realize that, despite historical interpretations¹⁶ and attempts at demythologizing¹⁷ and at showing the idea to be unscriptural,¹⁸ the descent into hell between Christ's death and resurrection is a necessary expression of the event of the redemption—not, indeed (as on Good Friday), within the history actually in progress, but (on Holy Saturday) in the history already accomplished of the old aeon, in the sheol of the Old Testament. Here it is important to remember that, contrary to all the eschatological ideas of later, moralistic Judaism,¹⁹ in the "beyond" there was no entrance into heaven (Heb 11:39–40) "before" (logically speaking) Christ's death and descent into sheol. Fundamentally, the goods of

¹³ *The Resurrection* (New York, 1960).

¹⁴ In my book on Karl Barth I have shown that this "consequent Christocentrism" can be developed in a genuinely Catholic sense, and that the leading Catholic theologians of today think, for the greater part, along these lines.

¹⁵ A. Grillmeier, "Der Gottessohn im Totenreich. Die Descensuslehre in der älteren christlichen Überlieferung", *ZKathTh* 71 (1949), 1–53, 184–204.

¹⁶ See the great work, not yet fully utilized, of J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle. Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe* (Berlin, 1932).

¹⁷ For instance, in the historical *aperçus* of Rivière on the doctrine of satisfaction.

¹⁸ W. Bieder, *Die Vorstellung von der Höllenfahrt Jesu Christi* (Zurich, 1949).

¹⁹ Which, of course, possessed a subtly nuanced doctrine of the Beyond (see P. Volz: *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinden im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter nach den Quellen der rabbinischen, apokalyptischen und apokryphen Literatur dargestellt* [Tübingen, 1934]). But Plato possessed one also.

salvation (such as faith, hope, charity) in sheol—assuming there to be such—must be considered, at best, a kind of “anticipation” of the illumination brought by the Redeemer’s descent into that “temporal *poena damni*” (Pohle-Gierens, *Dogm* III, 660). It must be emphasized that the believer also understands what damnation really is—taking the term strictly theologically and in its primary sense—when he takes full account of the *terminus a quo* of the redemption. The darkness into which sinful humanity must sink becomes evident at the moment when—in Christ’s “descent” into (we do not say the “place”, but) the “state” of perdition²⁰—this darkness becomes a yawning abyss ready to be illuminated by the light of the redemption. The mystery of Holy Saturday is two things simultaneously: the utmost extremity of the *exinanitio* and the beginning of the *gloria* even before the resurrection. This was the view of the Fathers, as it is today the idea of redemption in the Eastern Church. Only with Christ’s descent into the stagnation of sheol does there come into being, in the “beyond”, something in the nature of a “way”, a mode of access; and this means that “purgatory”, meaning the aspect of the judgment that opens to the sinner a purifying passage through fire, had no existence in the Old Testament (either in the logical or temporal order), and could only be *created* through the “evacuation” of sheol. In this respect, Thomas’ doctrine that the fire of hell and that of purgatory are the same fire (*S Th* IV, 21, 1) contains a certain truth, though, on the other hand, it is precisely this part of medieval theology with its main stress on the localized *receptacula* that most needs revision.²¹

²⁰ Of course, this does not mean approval of Calvin’s doctrine, for the reason that the continuous *visio immediata Dei in anima Christi* makes his experience of hell wholly incommensurate with any other, gives it an “exemplary”, soteriological and trinitarian significance.

²¹ M. Jugie, unfortunately, expresses the situation correctly, when he says (perhaps with a certain deliberate humor): “*Saint-Thomas . . . soutient que cette visite du Sauveur aux séjours d’outre-tombe ne changea rien au cours normal de la justice divine pour ce qui regarde le purgatoire*”, *Le Purgatoire et les moyens de l’éviter* (Paris). And the same may be said of the third and fourth *receptacula*, limbo and hell. And since in the “forehell” supernatural hope must be considered present, nothing at all really happens (in the sense of the redemptive *happening*). What a departure from early Christianity! A purely static, because cosmological, eschatology was not capable of

The reduction of "purgatory" from a "place" to a "state" means little enough unless one is also prepared to ascribe the purifying character of this state to the encounter of the as yet unpurified sinner with the *Kyrios* appearing to him in judgment. Certainly we may agree with Joachim Gnilka who, after reviewing the whole range of exegesis and referring the "testing fire" of the day of the Lord to Christ's coming at the last judgment, then represents this fire (in view of Is 66:15-16) simply as an "image of the majesty of God revealing himself . . . the inapproachability of the All-Holy".²² On the other hand, it is undeniable that, according to the Bible, there are not two judgments or judgment days, but only one, and, therefore, we must see the particular judgment after death in some kind of dynamic connection with the last judgment. It would, moreover, be a great gain for the ecumenical dialogue if we could understand the so-called "purgatorial fire" as a dimension of judgment, as the sinner's encounter with Christ's "eyes as a flame of fire" and "feet . . . as a burning furnace" (Apoc 1:14 = Dan 10:6). Y. Congar, in his important study on purgatory,²³ points out that the Church has made very few factual pronouncements on it, and that it is to be interpreted soteriologically in connection with the *Descensus* (here of the mystical body).²⁴ If this idea of encounter is applied consistently, then the judgment too will be interpreted in full accord with the Bible as the sinner coming face to face with the Redeemer as judge.²⁵ The indissoluble unity of judgment and redemption, justice and mercy on

representing the *event* of Christ's passage through the state of perdition. The extreme example of this inability is one not even to be tolerated theologically as poetic license: Dante's representation of a Christian's "passage" (on the steps of Christ or only of the pagan Virgil?) through hell, in which nothing happens of relevance to salvation.

²² Gnilka, 126: "Christus autem est ut ignis purissimus, qui est inseparabilis a luce, . . . et est ignis ille spiritualis vitae et intellectus, qui ut omnia consumens, intra se receptans, omnia et probat et iudicat quasi iudicium materialis ignis, cuncta examinans. . . . Ita Christus iudex secundum unicuique simplicissimum atque indistinctum iudicium in une momento. . . ." Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia*, III, 9.

²³ In *Le mystère de la mort et sa célébration* (Paris, 1951).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

²⁵ See D. Mollat, art. *Judgment*. Dict. Bibl. Suppl.

the cross is the warrant for the rightness of the New Testament demand on Christians to await the judgment as the presentation (parousia) of the truth of the cross and resurrection in an attitude of both fear and hope, and to persevere therein, watching and praying for the Lord's coming, this being the absolutely basic Christian attitude. This existential New Testament doctrine on the last things has nothing to do with the idea of a proximate coming, and is not to be made conditional on it. It is more in the nature of the final attitude and act of the Christian, the final state of his knowledge in faith, which is not strengthened but weakened, not deepened but made more superficial, if the believer presumes any knowledge of the outcome of the judgment, rather than persevering in hope and fear, action and endurance.

Once theologians (doubtless *bona fide* and thinking that faith demands it) consider they have "certainty of faith"²⁶ about the outcome of the judgment, they decide in advance, unknowingly, a whole range of questions, and the consequences necessarily reach into what would seem the most remote parts of theology. These unavoidable conclusions, however, are clearly inconsistent with what the Bible teaches on salvation, and so reveal their questionable nature. The claim to know the outcome of the judgment (in the sense of certain knowledge that the Judge will condemn some) has, at least, three consequences. They were all, as a matter of logic, received into theology, once eschatology had taken on this basic pattern, that is to say at the time of Augustine. First, despite the consistently positively conceived idea of predestination in scripture, which left the matter open, men were obliged to adopt a doctrine of double predestination, equally oppressive whether *ante* or *post praevisa merita*. Christian belief thus took on that dark and menacing aspect which brought untold suffering to mankind in the Middle Ages and the Reformation, even to the men of the Counter-Reformation. It was a spirit in strong contrast with that

²⁶ For example, Fulgentinus, *De fide*, rule 35: "Hold with firm, unshakeable faith that not only all pagans, but also all Jews, heretics and schismatics who terminate their lives outside the Catholic Church, will go into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (PL 65, 704). What is significant is not so much the extreme character of the statement itself as the fact that knowledge of the (this!) outcome of judgment should be put forward as an article of faith.

of early Christianity and the patristic era. We are just now beginning, in conformity with scripture, to grope our way by degrees to a more objective position. Secondly, when Christ is not looked on as the *Eschaton*, but when the results of the judgment are considered as "objects" capable of being known, the character of faith undergoes a change. Instead of a loving and trusting submission of the whole person to the personal divine truth of the Father in the Son, it becomes, of necessity, an intellectual, neutral act embracing indifferently truths both of salvation and reprobation and, therefore, only when it is directed to a truth of salvation can it comprise love and hope and trust.²⁷ With this is closely connected a strangely truncated idea of hope, since it now seems against faith to hope for the salvation of all men; though this clearly conflicts with the biblical idea of hope. Furthermore it means that Christ cannot have prayed for the *reprobi*, since his prayer cannot fail.²⁸ Thirdly, this deciding in advance entails attributing to a most important series of scriptural texts, which make the salvation of all something to be hoped for (though unknowable), a sense which takes away part of the force they clearly possess.

Human thought always has the urge to "systematize"; but scripture lets the possible, indeed the actual twofold outcome of the judgment remain "unreconciled" alongside the prospect of universal reconciliation; nor is there any possibility of subordinating one to the other. Origen attempted this from one standpoint, reducing hell to a kind of purgatory, and so weakening what scripture says of the judgment. Augustine (and the theologians who followed him) did so from the opposite standpoint, depriving the hope of universal redemption of all foundation. Yet this too enfeebles faith in eschatological doctrine, as was

²⁷ "On the other hand, one can yet believe what one does not hope for. What believer does not believe, for example, in the punishments of the godless? But he will not hope for it. . . . Faith, therefore, is related to both good and evil, since one may believe in both good and evil, and with good, not with evil faith." Augustine, *Enchiridion*, c. 8. And so right up to the high Middle Ages.

²⁸ Thomas, *S Th* III, 22, 4, ad 2: *Dominus non oravit pro omnibus crucifixoribus neque etiam pro omnibus qui erant credituri in eum, sed pro his solum qui erant praedestinati, ut per ipsum vitam consequerentur aeternam*. If this were the case, the prayer of the Church, according to 1 Tim 2:1f., would have a wider scope than Christ's, which, however, in Jn 17, seems absolutely universal (v. 2 and notwithstanding v. 12).

well understood by Charles Péguy who, on account of the "intolerableness" of what was taught about hell, left the Church, returning to it when he found a kind of "solution". This he expressed in his "Mystère de Jeanne d'Arc", where Joan, with her inward "revolt" against the possible damnation of her brothers, the sinners, suddenly realizes in prayer that she is at one with God himself in her revolt against the loss of anyone at all. As regards scripture, Christ's statements about the judgment (particularly Matthew 25:31f.) are not intended to impart a placid "knowledge" of facts, unfortunately unalterable, which like the damnation of a part of mankind must be accepted with resignation. Concerning the "*effort incroyable, terrible de volonté d'humilité*" of Madame Gervaise,²⁹ Joan perceives behind the appearance that

Au fond elle en prend son parti. Elle en souffre beaucoup, mais au fond, tout au fond, elle en prend son parti. . . . Elles s'y résignent. Elles s'y habituent. Mais vous, mon Dieu, vous ne vous n'y habituez pas. Vos saints ne s'y habituent pas. Jésus, votre Saint, ne s'y habitue pas. Vous ne vous y résignez pas. . . . Mon Dieu, j'ai des prières secrètes. Vous le savez. Je vous suis confidente.³⁰

Of course, from the standpoint of theology, there are important reservations to be made as regards this poetical passage. No one, not even the saint, can simply equate his earthly wishes and hopes with the "hope" of God and of Christ, without that absolute Christian *indifference* to the two, which is necessary even, and particularly, as regards the judgment passed, but is not the same as a purely passive "acceptance". There is, however, one thing that can be said of Péguy's adoption of an eschatology that leaves open the outcome of the judgment that is bound up with the person of the Redeemer and Judge, and renounces any final systematization: it is that this has always been characteristic of the eschatology of the mystics, for whom the experiences of the "dark night" and of "hell" always had a

²⁹ Péguy, *Oeuvres poétiques compl* (Paris), 151.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1347.

soteriological meaning (we may instance the two Matildas, Gertrude, Bridget, Teresa, John of the Cross, also Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, and so many others who had some experience of the divine darkness). Péguy, as well as Claudel³¹ and Bernanos, thinks along the same lines of Thérèse of Lisieux with her absolute hope,³² in whose wake follows the whole "theology of hope", with its practical orientation, as developed over the last decade in France and now developing in Germany.³³ This line of thought, however, will only remain within the obedience of faith if it avoids the opposite pitfall of an esoteric Origenism with its opposition to the eschatology of the Church and her preaching on the grounds of its being antiquated.³⁴ If the "reduction" here developed is accepted, one cannot, at the same time, attempt a contrary (secretly Gnostic) systematization. Gottlieb Söhngen put the matter well, in Kantian terminology, when he said that the redemption of the entire creation might well be a *regulative idea*, but could never be a *constitutive principle* of theology.

The process of reduction must also be applied to the theology of the *Limbus puerorum*. This question has lately been raised anew by,

³¹ For example, the *Cantique de Palmyre* (in *Conversations dans le Loire et Cher*).

³² See my *Thérèse of Lisieux* (New York).

³³ Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (New York).

³⁴ "No one can assert with real authority that there is no hell any longer, but it will, nonetheless, no longer be taken into calculation" (*Wort und Wahrheit* II, May 1956, 330). Consequently the present "theology of hell" needs, at times, to be handled with great care (one good account, though only provisional, is the joint work of Bardy, Carrouges, Dorival, Spicq, Heres and Guitton: *Lenfer*, ed. Rev. des Jeunes [Paris, 1950]; the collected essays, *Satan*, of the *Etudes Carmélitaines* [1948], are open to serious objections). The fact that so many theologians avoid the subject only shows that they are aware of its difficulty. Anyone who approaches it today must be conversant with biblical theology as well as historical and systematic theology. In fact, he must have made up his mind on a "theological gnoseology of the eschatological statements considered in their possibility and their limits", and also whether "these limits are the same for 'heaven' and for 'hell', or whether (what would be more correct) we are bound in certain respects to deny this. This would then have to be kept in mind when in what follows the two final states are treated of in succession as though they were on the same level" (Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. I [Baltimore, 1961], 36).

among others, Peter Gumpel, S.J.³⁵ The limits of eschatological thought during this life's pilgrimage are made very clear here. Finally, as Karl Rahner has repeatedly pointed out, the connection between the *visio beatifica*, between "heaven" and the risen humanity of Christ, has been almost entirely neglected by theologians.

We may conclude with one observation. The *eschata* must be interpreted throughout christologically, which means, at the deepest level, in trinitarian terms. This applies to the judgment, purgatory, hell and sheol (which, in its biblical sense, is by no means the innocuous "forehell" it has been made into). Only then will eschatology be sufficiently decosmologized, freed of the remnants of sub-Christian philosophy, and become, in its object, an integral part of personal obedience in faith to Jesus Christ.

3. Expansion

The results that follow from an eschatology based on christological principles extend to every sphere of theology and, beyond that, to a philosophical interpretation of man and the world in the light of revelation. They are, in fact, so extensive and involved that we cannot give here even a cursory glance at them. All that is possible is a rapid and approximate enumeration of the questions that arise and that concern the present time. They are, first, questions within eschatology itself; second, those about the effects of eschatology on the rest of theology; third, those concerning the encounter between theology and philosophy in view of a convergence of the natural and supernatural finality of man and the cosmos, or of an integration of the factors, known to us, of natural eschatology into the more comprehensive data of the Christian faith. These three, however, are constantly overlapping; and, if we wish to keep abreast of the progress made in this field, we must always keep all three together in mind.

1. Today we can only build up eschatology by taking account of

³⁵ "Unbaptized Infants, May They Be Saved?" *Downside Review* (1954), 342-458, with comprehensive list of works. "Unbaptized Infants, a Further Report" (*ibid.*, [1955], 317-46), in which additional writers are cited and answered.

the structure of theology in general, and, in addition, of our present understanding of the world and of man. In every epoch, the Church comes to look on the Old and New Testaments in a fresh light, gaining understanding for the value of a particular text in the light of its historical setting, its context in religious history and in the history of revelation. The insights thus gained may lead her to propose criticism (often far-reaching) of the traditional exegesis; but as a result of some slight transpositions, they may also bring to light new and valid aspects of traditional thought.

There is no question of "demythologization", which, as the results show, splits asunder the body and soul of revelation, and ends up in an arid existentialism, narrow and unconvincing. It is, instead, a matter of explaining the word of God in the text it has assumed. For instance, concerning the Old Testament idea of sheol, we can adduce parallels from the Near East, show that Platonism represents a higher stage of thought in religious history, prove that Judaism at the time of Christ possessed a far more detailed eschatology than that of the great prophets and psalmists. Nonetheless this apparently "imperfect" doctrine is the most decisive for theology; it is the point of access to the redemptive act of Christ which we must not simply circumvent, which, in many ways, the subtler Greek eschatology fails to elucidate. Even the concrete representations of sheol with their anthropomorphic characteristics are not to be discarded, but interpreted theologically. This is the only way to achieve, by degrees, a fully developed eschatology. The same considerations apply throughout to the expectation of the messiah.³⁶ They are valid, too, for the study of the differences in the ideas of time within the Old Testament itself, as also for the differences between the Old and New Testaments. In this connection, new light may be thrown on the whole complex of ideas, already known to the Fathers, concerning the distinction between time of promise and time of fulfillment, in fact between the three times of mere promise (the Old Testament), of fulfilled promise along

³⁶ See *L'attente du Messie*, by Cerfaux, Coppens, de Langhe and others (Desclée, 1954), with copious references by W. G. Kümmel, "Verheissung und Erfüllung", *Untersuchung zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu. Abh z Theol d u N T 6* (Zurich, 1945).

with fulfillment promised (the Church of the New Testament), and complete fulfillment (eschatology). Dodd's "realized eschatology" and, opposed to it, Cullmann's "preparatory [*vorlaufende*] time" help, by their mutual dialectic, toward an understanding of the biblical idea of time.³⁷ For the latter overlaps the ideas of time held by various peoples and by philosophers, which ideas revelation both judges and adjusts itself to.³⁸ In consequence, the situation, in its historical aspect, shows itself more complicated than was foreseen. The "revealed religion" of Iran seems to agree with Judaism and Christianity in holding to a historical time striving to an end instead of to a cyclical time of nature. Once again, as in the case of the idea of the "resurrection"³⁹ and "individual eschatology" (as in "particular judgment" and "immortality"),⁴⁰ we come upon data of a *preparatio evangelica* whose theological bearing has not been sufficiently investigated.

Still more comprehensive is the work to be done on the actual eschatological texts of scripture, those of the prophets and the apocalyptic parts, in which Christ and his apostles adopt the modes of expression of the current apocalyptic, but only to bring out the full meaning of the prophetic vision and to complete it.⁴¹ It is not a question of reviving a past form, but of inserting the central revelation of the fullness of time into the form prepared by the prophetic writings. This form is what Martin Buber describes as that of the

³⁷ See E. C. Rust, "Time and Eternity in Biblical Thought", *Theology Today* (Princeton, 1953), 327-56.

³⁸ We may select, out of the deluge of works comparing the biblical with the Greek conception of time, J. Guitton's *Le temps et l'éternité chez Platon et St. Augustin* (Paris, 1933).

³⁹ F. Nötscher, *Altorientalischer und alttestamentlicher Auferstehungsglaube* (Würzburg, 1926).

⁴⁰ J. Bonsirven, *Le Judaïsme palestinien au temps de Jésus Christ* (Paris, 1934); J.-B. Frey, "La vie de l'au-delà dans les conceptions juives au temps de Jésus Christ", *Bibl* 13 (1932), 129-68; Y. Trémel, "L'homme entre la mort et la résurrection d'après le Nouveau Testament", *L'immortalité de l'âme. Lumière et Vie* 24 (1955), 729-54.

⁴¹ This explains the remarkable absence of a doctrine of an "intermediate state" in the New Testament, though it was worked out in contemporary Judaism (see Volz, *op. cit.*).

"*Alternativik*,"⁴² and it is, of its nature, repugnant to any systematization, since it is "dialogical". From this firm standpoint the interpretation of the apocalyptic form becomes exceptionally difficult; discussion on it is in progress, and it will take a long time before definite clarification is reached. Questions of theological gnoseology play an important part here, among others that of the theological meaning of Christian "mysticism" (taken in the sense of Paul and John as charismatic, as opposed to the psychological and ontological tradition of modern mystical theology); only in this way can a bridge be built between biblical and ecclesiastical mysticism.⁴³ Mysticism is seen to have an eschatological function in the Church, and Schweitzer is not illogical when he defends both the radical eschatology of the gospel and, at the same time, the mysticism of Paul.⁴⁴ The pure apocalyptic teaching of the Bible cannot be attained merely by a consideration of "literary forms".

There is ample scope for discussion on the relations between the ancient Jewish and the Hellenic elements in the eschatology of Paul and on the projection of Alexandrian forms of thought into those of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The whole history, too, of eschatological ideas in the patristic age and in later theology needs investigation. It is a vast, unexplored region which, if cultivated intelligently, should prove one of the most fruitful in the history of theology. Certainly the task can be undertaken only when biblical eschatology has achieved, to some degree, the clear outlines that can serve as normative for later theology.⁴⁵

⁴² *Der Glaube der Propheten* (Zurich, 1950). "The alternative that lies in the background (of the prophetic statements about damnation) is not expressed in them (namely: unless you be converted). Only in this way can the word touch the depths of the soul, and perhaps stir it to the extreme act, that of conversion" (150). Admittedly, the *alternativik* can also be superseded by the statement couched quite simply in absolute terms (as in the Second Isaiah) (299).

⁴³ See my book, *Thomas und die Charismatik*, Thomas-Ausgabe, vol. 23 (1954), 251-464.

⁴⁴ Emil Brunner's alternative between mysticism and word is, biblically, quite unacceptable (*Die Mystik und das Wort*, 1924), as also that of Heiler between prophetic and mystical prayer (*Das Gebet*, 1918).

⁴⁵ What Karl Rahner says in general of monographs on the history of dogma is particularly applicable to eschatology: "The greater part of these works is wholly retrospective. They do not derive from the past any impulse for the future of

2. The work of bringing out how the *eschata* are present in all the other tracts of theology has only begun. We mention here only a few themes: the confrontation of protology (predestination, the doctrine of creation, that of paradise) with eschatology, of the history of salvation with eschatology, the Church as the presence and as the future of the last things, the relationship of sacramental doctrine and eschatology.⁴⁶ A few quite disparate materials for a theology of history have begun to be assembled. Schmaus has the merit of bringing the theology of history and apocalyptic theology back within the broad stream of eschatology, and so to have imparted to the theological treatise a fullness and concreteness it has long lacked. In addition, he has seen the necessity of remolding the whole of theology in view of the *eschata*, without on that account falling into a one-sided eschatologism ("Das Eschatologische im Christentum", *Aus der Theologie der Zeit* I [1948], 56-84). The mystery of advent in regard to history has often been treated of by Jean Daniélou (*Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire* [Paris, 1952]; *Le mystère de l'Avent* [Paris, 1948]; *Sacramentum futuri* [Paris, 1950]) in answer to modern Protestant theology, and, at the same time, reconstructing the patristic theology of history.

3. Finally there is the new encounter of theological and philosophical eschatology, fertile in results for both, but more fraught with difficulty than ever. Through the clear demarcation of what belongs to theology, the way is freed for new problems of philosophy to be

dogmatic theology. They show how what is accepted has come about" (*Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, 7). And the eschatology of Thomas, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, an exhaustive treatment for the time it was written, has never been worked out fully and systematically and from a historical point of view.

⁴⁶ A few initial studies are all we have for the baptismal doctrine of Rom 6 (see Dom O. Rousseau, "La descente aux enfers, fondement sotériologique du baptême chrétien", *R. S. R. Mélanges Lebreton* II [Paris, 1952], 273-97), and for the eucharist as an eschatological meal (see Daniélou, *Mystère de l'histoire*, 211f.). But there is nothing on the connection between the sacrament of penance and the resurrection, confirmation and the eschatological giving of the Spirit ("in the last days", Acts 2:17), on the relationship between the sacrament of orders and the last things. Karl Rahner has in view a new conception of the doctrine of extreme unction in connection with a theology of death.

considered, which again react fruitfully on theology. The philosophy of time and history, of man and his (natural) end, of death, of the finality of the cosmos as a whole, are today so many open fields of research that await cultivation.

The risen Christ is the fulfillment of the meaning, as prescribed by the Father, of man, history and the cosmos;⁴⁷ and, therefore, the advance of the created world cannot be indifferent or foreign to this end. All that impels the cosmos toward the realization of its meaning, while remaining subject to supernatural causality, must be integrated into the miracle of the supernatural order, of grace and redemption, the miracle of the resurrection of the body.⁴⁸ In this connection, we cannot neglect the broad stream of cosmological thought, which, continuing the high-Scholastic and idealist-romantic philosophy of nature (Baader, Görres), tends now in a clearly anti-Platonist and antispiritualist direction, to a rehabilitation of the body,⁴⁹ of matter,⁵⁰ of the idea of the incarnation of the spirit,⁵¹ of the idea of sense-activity as attaining even a religious knowledge of God.⁵² Hengstenberg, in a number of works,⁵³ has endeavored to show

⁴⁷ Fr. Meister, *Die Vollendung der Welt im Opfer des Gottmenschen* (Freiburg, 1938).

⁴⁸ Which, for Scholasticism, is always general. See *S Th Suppl.* 75, 3: *Utrum resurrectio sit naturalis*, where the answer is a distinction: *simpliciter loquendo est miraculosa, non naturalis, nisi secundum quid.*

⁴⁹ V. Poucel, S. J., *Mystique de la terre*; vol. 1, "Plaidoyer le pour corps". Preface by Paul Claudel; vol. 2, "La parabole du monde" (Paris, 1937, 1939). "La sensation du divine", *Présence et prophétie* (1942).

⁵⁰ Gustav Siewerth, *Der Mensch und sein Leib* (Einsiedeln, 1953). *Wort und Bild* (Schwann, 1952). *Die Sinne und das Wort* (Schwann, 1956).

⁵¹ K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt* (1939). Hans André, *Vom Sinnreich des Lebens*. An ontology of the basic structure of faith (Salzburg); and *Die Kirche als Keimzelle der Weltvergöttlichung*. An outline-structure in the light of biological considerations. The works (Leipzig, 1920) of Hedwig Conrad-Martius, and, in the field of history, of Friedrich Heer, for whom all the demons in Christian and Church history originate in an abstract spiritism, that is, one derived from the body, from the "underground", from the *Mater-materia*.

⁵² Paul Claudel, "L'Ars poétique, Sur la Présence de Dieu, La Sensation du Divin", *Présence et Prophétie* (1942).

⁵³ Most recently *Der Lieb und die Letzten Dinge* (Regensburg, 1955). A recasting of *Tod und Vollendung* (Regensburg, 1938).

how these various conceptions amount to a transfiguration of matter by spirit (transformation from "corporeality" to a state which is organic and spiritual), and thus to propound an outline of "natural eschatology".⁵⁴ This envisages a "natural transfiguration", death, to a great extent, by its purifying function, bringing about the domination of the spirit. At the same time, the Platonist doctrine of fulfillment is countered not merely polemically, but positively, in that the process of spiritualization proceeds radically from matter. In this way, Hengstenberg, perhaps for the first time, applies the law of *gratia supponit naturam* to the resurrection, without, however, laying himself open to the suspicion of confusing theology with gnosis and nature-mysticism.⁵⁵ Alois Dempf skilfully takes over the anthropology and cosmology of German idealism (Schelling, Schlegel, Görres) into a Catholic metaphysic. Frank-Duquesne (*Cosmos et Gloire*, with prefaces by Claudel and Dom Capelle [Paris, 1947]) skirts on Eastern sophiology, which runs the risk of incorporating indiscriminately natural and supernatural eschatology in a comprehensive religious metaphysic. It is an open question whether Teilhard de Chardin, in his eschatological outlook, succeeds in avoiding a simple incorporation of the eschatological data of revelation into a system of universal cosmic evolution.

In constructing a sound and comprehensive eschatology of man, history and the cosmos, it is the task of Catholic thought to take up the themes of present-day existentialist philosophy and theology. We still lack a complete theology of death,⁵⁶ and also a Catholic philosophy and theology of history⁵⁷ and the cosmos which is more than a mere outline.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵ "Supernatural transfiguration must, in some way, include the perfections of natural transfiguration, without the specific nature of supernatural transfiguration being put on a level with that of the natural": *Der Leib und die Letzten Dinge* (Regensburg, 1955), 156.

⁵⁶ An important contribution to one is Berlinger's *Das Nichts und der Tod* (Frankfurt). See also Reisenfeld, *La descente dans la mort* (Paris, 1950).

⁵⁷ Besides the works already cited of Pieper and Daniélou, we should notice T. Haecker, *Der Christ und die Geschichte* (1935); Konrad Weiss, *Zum geschichtlichen Gethsemani* (1919); Peter Wust, *Dialektik des Geistes* (1928); J. Bernhart, *Der Sinn der Geschichte* (1931).

Finally, we may mention the problem of the relationship between Jewish and Christian eschatology, which is as yet secret, but still urgent. Judaism, in reflecting on its own nature, has defined itself as an essentially religious and social messianism of this world (Buber, Baeck, Rosenweig, Achad Haam), with its characteristic "prophetic" linking of social reform (to the point of religious communism) with a "utopian" sense of belonging to God and the covenant alone. The strongest force behind capitalism and communism as well, behind the radical East and the radical West, is the Jewish force which, corresponding to its special function and nature, is strongly poised between cultural immanentism (in the bond of "blood and soil") and Christian transcendence: a world shattered, open to what is above the world (Christian), yet guarding against it with every possible means.

But Christ as man is the fulfillment also of Judaism and of its function. Jewish and Christian eschatology belong ultimately together, and it is all the more tragic that, in actual history, they seem to be so opposed. The transition from the Old to the New Testament cannot be taken to mean indifference to the tremendous witness of Israel in the fields of politics and society. The kingdom of God comes because Christ is a man, and a Jew—from above and from without. It is essentially a fruit of the earth, of Mary certainly, but in her of the entire holy people, which, as a real people, has its real function in the world.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ For the literature since 1957, see the third edition of *Fragen der Theologie heute* (1960), 566ff.